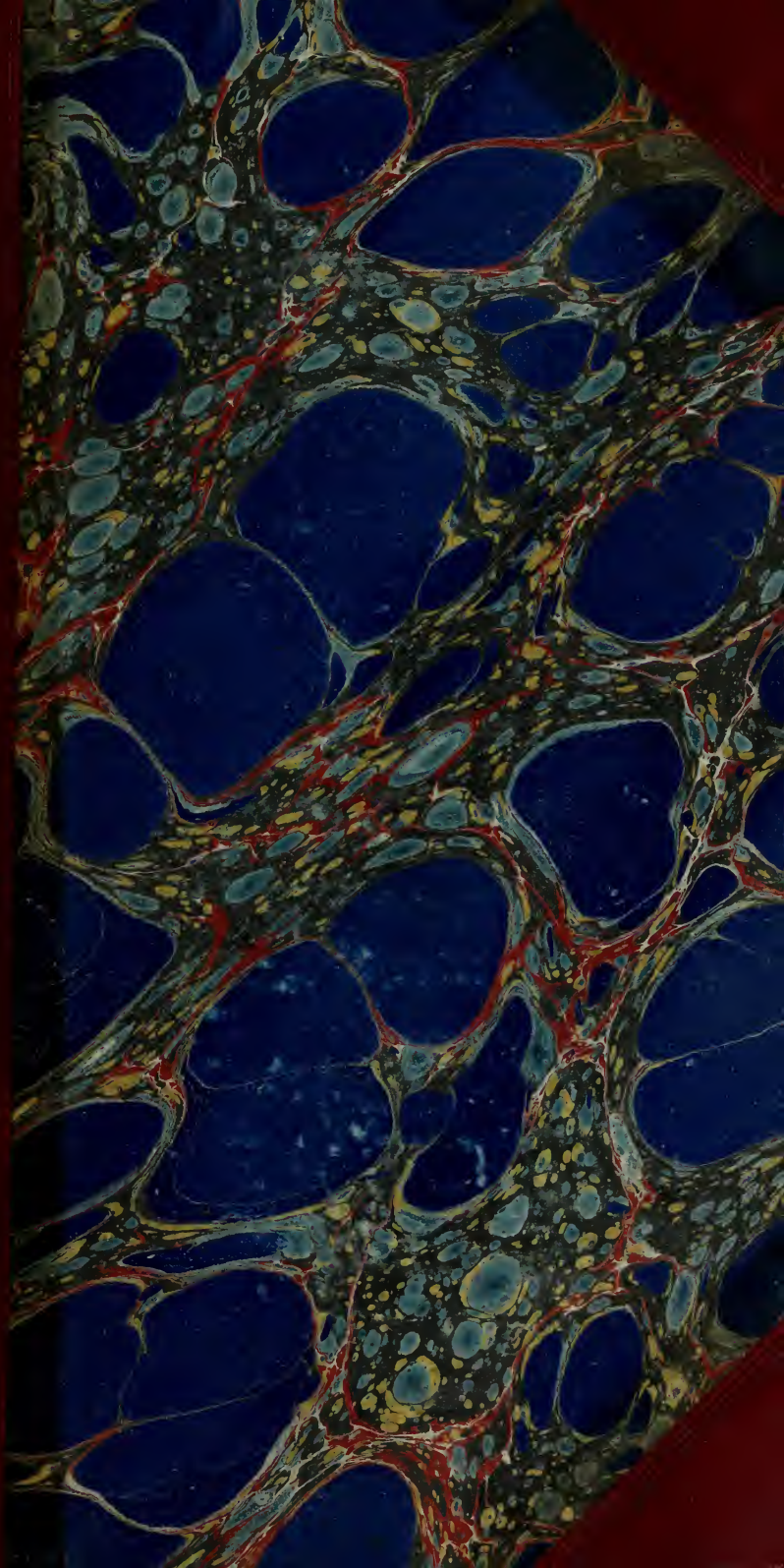




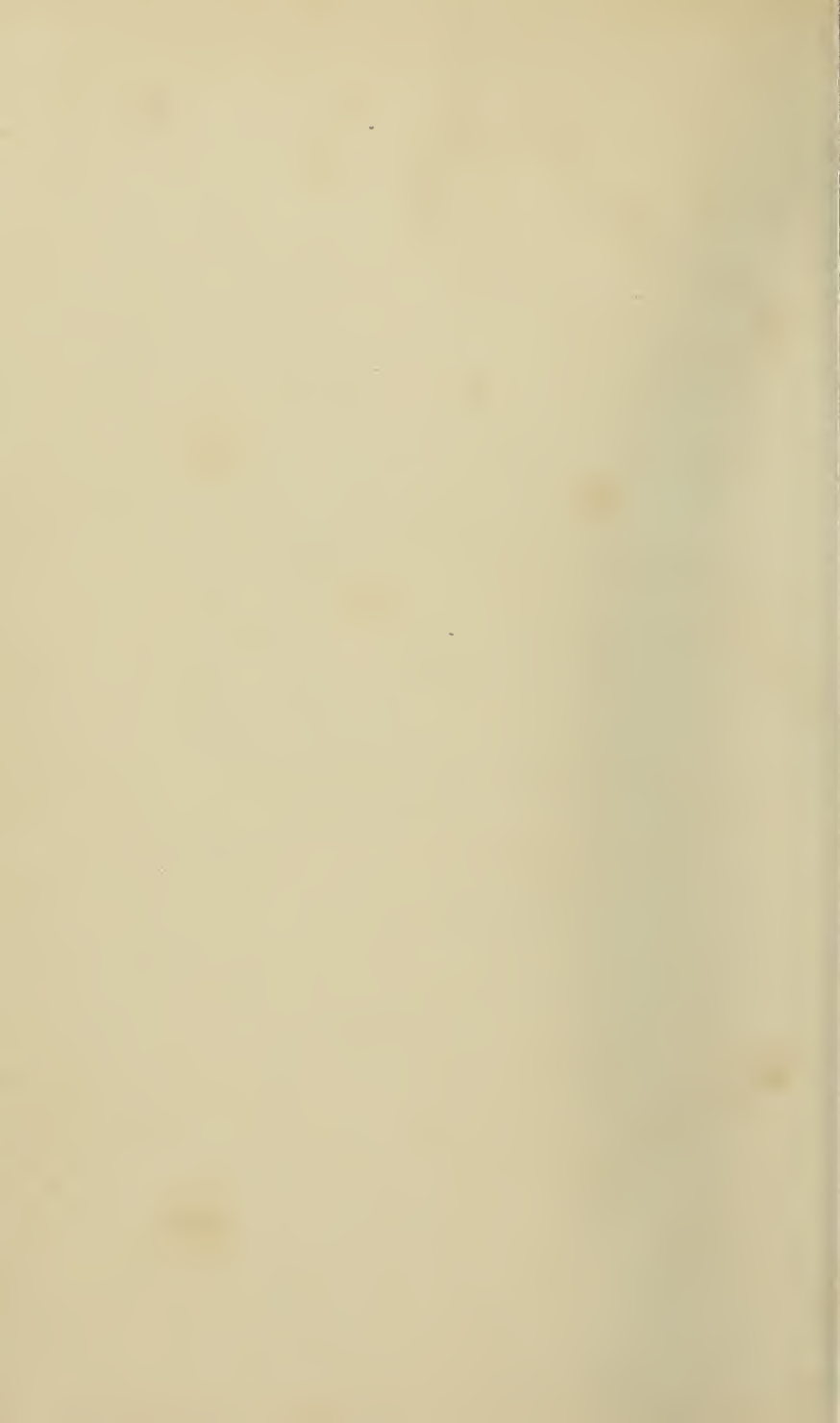
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M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE
ARGOSY.

EDITED BY
MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXXI

January to June, 1881.

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An Unexpected Visitor.

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

MISS MARGERY.

IN the midst of the Berkshire scenery, so fair and wealthy, this pleasant little place, Netherleigh, nestled in a grassy hollow. It was but a small, unpretending hamlet at the best, and its rustic inhabitants were hard-working and simple.

On the vast plain, surrounding it on all sides as far as the eye could reach, with its forests of trees, its hills and dales, and its sparkling streams of water, sat many a noble mansion of ancient or modern architecture, and of greater or lesser account and note in the county. Farm homesteads might be seen in plenty, surrounded by their out-buildings, their barns and ricks. Labourers' cottages were dotted about; labourers themselves toiled at their several occupations.

Flanking the village, and looking down upon it from its own eminence, rose the stately walls of Court Netherleigh: an imposing and beautiful edifice, with which none of those other mansions in the distance could compare. It was built of quaint, red brick, curious but bright-looking, and its gables and angles were picturesque in a high degree. Winding upwards from the village, you came upon the entrance gates, on the left of the road—great gates of wrought iron, with two smaller gates beside them. The lodges, built to match the house, stood a little back, one on each side the gates, roses and honeysuckle adorning the porches and lower windows. In one of these lodges, that on the left as you entered, lived the gatekeeper and his family; in the other the head gardener. Let us, in imagination, enter the gates.

It is Monday morning, the First of October, and a lovely day—warm, sunny, and genial. The gatekeeper's wife, a child clinging to her apron, runs to the door at the sound of steps, lest, haply, the great gates should need to be flung open. Seeing only a

foot-passenger, she drops a curtsy. Winding onwards through the drive that divides the park we see the house—Court Netherleigh, a wide, low, picturesque house; or perhaps it is only its great size that makes it look low, for it is three stories high. At the back, hidden by clustering trees, are the stables and out-offices. Extensive gardens lie around the house, which show a profusion of luscious fruits and choice vegetables, of smooth, green lawns, miniature rocks, grassy glades, and lovely flowers. Fine old trees give shade to the park, deer sport on its level grass. Altogether, the place is grand and beautiful, and evidently well-cared for. Whosoever it may be that reigns at Court Netherleigh reigns with no sparing hand.

We shall soon see her, for it is a lady. Ascending the three low broad stone steps that lead to the entrance hall, rooms lie on either hand. But none of these rooms are inhabited this morning. We must make our way to the back of the hall, go down a passage on the right of it, and open a door at the end.

A rather small room, its walls white and gold, the tint of its furniture pale, subdued green, glass doors standing open to the outer air—that is what arrested the eye. It was called Miss Margery's parlour, and of all the rooms in Court Netherleigh it was the one that Miss Margery loved the best.

Miss Margery was seated in it this morning, near the table, sewing away at a child's petticoat, intended probably for one of the young ones at the lodge, or for some little waif in the hamlet. Miss Margery was no hand at fine work, she was wont to say, but at plain, useful work few could beat her, and she did not choose to be idle. She was a little woman, short and small, with a fair complexion and plain features, possessing more than her proper share of good common sense, and very active and energetic, as little people often are. She always wore silk. Her gown this morning was of her favourite violet colour, with a large lace collar fastened by a gold brooch, and black lace mittens under her lace-edged sleeves. She wore also a white clear-muslin apron with a braided border; the fashion of these aprons had come in when Miss Margery was a much younger woman, and she would not leave them off. She need not have worn a cap, for her hair was still abundant; but in those days middle-aged ladies wore caps, and Miss Margery was turned fifty. She wore her hair in ringlets, also the custom then, and the lace lappets of her cap fell behind them. This was Miss Upton, generally in the house called Miss Margery, the owner of Court Netherleigh and its broad lands.

The glass doors of the French window opened to the lawn, on which lay beds of mignonette and other sweet-scented flowers, a fountain playing in the midst. At the open window, one of them just outside, the other within, stood two young girls in the first blush of womanhood. The elder, Frances, had light hair and a piquant, saucy face; it had no particular beauty to recommend it, but her

temper was of the pleasantest, and her manners were charming. Hence Frances Chenevix was a general favourite. Her sister, one year younger than herself, and just nineteen, was beautiful. Her hair and eyes were of a bright brown, her features classically faultless, and the colour on her cheeks was delicate as a blush-rose. The sisters were of middle height, graceful and slender, and—there was no mistaking it—eminently aristocratic in bearing. They wore morning dresses of pink cambric—the mode in those by-gone days.

The elder, standing outside, had her hand to her eyes, shading them from the light, while she looked out steadily. The window faced the open country, on the side farthest from the village, which could not be seen from here. About half-a-mile distant might be seen the irregular chimnies of an old-fashioned house, called Moat Grange, with whose inmates they were intimate; and it was in that direction she was gazing.

“Do you happen to have a glass, Aunt Margery?” she suddenly asked, dropping her hand from her eyes and putting her head indoors to speak.

“A glass!” repeated Aunt Margery. “What sort of a glass, Frances?”

“Oh, I mean a telescope.”

“There’s one in the blue drawing-room. Adela can fetch it for you. It is in the table-drawer, my dear. But what is it you want to look at, Frances?” added Miss Upton, as Adela went in search of the glass.

“Only at a group in the road yonder. I cannot make out whether or not they are the people from the Grange. If so—they may be coming here. But they seem to be standing still; not to be moving.”

“Some labourers mending the road,” quietly spoke Miss Upton.

“No, Aunt Margery, I don’t think so; I am nearly sure I can distinguish bonnets. *Something* is glittering in the sun.”

“Do bonnets glitter, child?”

Frances laughed. “Selina has some shining grass in hers. Did you not notice it yesterday in church?”

“Not I,” said Miss Upton; “but I can take your word for it. Selina Dalrymple is fonder of dress than a French doll. Lack of sense and a love of finery often go together,” added Miss Upton, looking off her work to re-thread her needle: and Frances Chenevix nodded assent.

She stood looking out at the landscape: at the signs of labour to be seen around. The harvest was gathered, but out-door work, and plenty of it, lay to hand. Waggoners paced slowly beside their teams, with a crack now and again of the whip they held, or a word of encouragement to the leading horse. At this moment the sound of a gun was heard in the direction of Moat Grange. Frances went off into excitement.

“Aunt Margery, they are shooting!”

“Well, my dear, is that anything unusual on the First of October?”

spoke Miss Upton, smiling. "Robert Dalrymple would think it strange, I guess, if he did not go out to-day to bag his pheasants—poor things ! I daresay it was his gun."

"And there's another report—and another !" cried the young lady. "They are shooting away ! Adela must be *making* that glass, Aunt Margery."

Adela Chevenix had gone, listlessly enough, into the blue room : one of the magnificent drawing-rooms in front, its colours blue and silver. She opened the first table-drawer she came to ; but did not see a telescope, or anything that looked like one. Then she glanced about her in other directions.

"Janet," she called out, hearing a maid servant pass the door, "do you know where the telescope is ?"

"The spy-glass," returned the girl, entering, and calling the article by the name most familiar to her. "No, I don't, my lady."

"Aunt Margery said it was in this room."

"I know Miss Margery had it a few days ago. She was spying through it at that rick that was on fire over yonder. I'll look in the other rooms, my lady."

Adela sat down at the window, and fell into a train of thought. The maid came back, saying she could not find the glass : and the young lady forgot all about it, and sat on.

"Well," said Miss Margery, interrupting her presently, "and where's the glass you were sent for, Adela ? And what's the matter ?"

Adela started up ; the blush-rose on her cheek deepening to a rich damask.

"I—I am afraid I forgot it, Aunt Margery. I can't find the glass."

Miss Upton walked to the further end of the large room, opened the drawer of a small table, and took out the glass.

"Oh," said Adela, repentantly ; "it was in this table I looked, Aunt Margery."

"No doubt. But you should have looked in this one also, Adela. I hope the child has not got that Captain Stanley in her mind still, worrying herself over his delinquencies !" mentally concluded Miss Upton for her own private benefit.

They went back to the other room together. Frances Chenevix seized eagerly on the delayed glass, used it, and let it drop, with a disappointed air.

"They *are* road labourers, Aunt Margery, and nothing else."

"To be sure, my dear," calmly returned Miss Upton, settling to her sewing again.

The owner of Court Netherleigh, preceding Miss Margery, was Sir Francis Netherleigh ; his baronetcy being of old creation. Sir Francis had lived at the Court with his wife, very quietly : they had no children : and if both of them were of a saving turn, not to say parsimonious, the fact might be accounted for, and justified by their circumstances. Some of his ancestors had been wofully extravagant ;

and before he, Sir Francis, was born, his father and grandfather had combined together to cut off the entail. The title must of course go to the next male heir; but the property—what was left of it—need not. However, it was eventually willed in the right direction, and Francis Netherleigh came into the estate and the title when he was a young man. He married a prudent, good woman, of gentle but not high lineage; they cheerfully set themselves to the work of repairing what their forefathers had destroyed, and by the time Sir Francis was five-and-fifty years of age, the estate was righted and bringing in its full revenues again—fifteen thousand a year. Lady Netherleigh died about that time, and Sir Francis, as a widower, continued to live the same quiet, economical, unceremonious life that he and his wife had lived together. He was a religious, good man.

Naturally, the question, to whom Sir Francis would bequeath this fine estate, became a matter of speculation with sundry gossips—who always, you are aware, take more interest in our affairs than we take ourselves. The title would lapse; that was known; unless indeed Sir Francis should marry again and have a son. The only relatives he had in the world were three distant female cousins.

The eldest of these young ladies in point of years was Catherine Grant; the second was Margery Upton, and the third was Elizabeth Cleveland. Margery and Elizabeth were cousins in a third degree to one another; but they were not related to Catherine. The young ladies met occasionally at Court Netherleigh; for Sir Francis invariably invited all three of them together; never one alone. They corresponded at other times, and were good friends. The first of them to marry was Catherine Grant. She became the wife of one Christopher Grubb, a merchant of account in the City of London. This you must please understand was thirty years before this month of October we are writing of: and *that* again was many years prior to the present time.

In those days, to be in trade, no matter of how high a class it might be, was looked upon by the upper classes as next door to being in Purgatory. For all social purposes you might almost as well have been in the one as the other. Trading was a social crime, and nothing less. Opinions have wonderfully altered now; but many people will remember that what I state is true. Therefore, when Catherine Grant, who was of gentle blood, so far forgot what was due to herself and her friends as to espouse Mr. Grubb, she was held to have degraded herself for ever. What with the man's name, and what with his having a counting-house, poor Catherine had effectually placed herself beyond the pale of society. A few sharp, stinging letters were written to her; one by Sir Francis Netherleigh, one each by the two remaining young ladies; they told her she had lost caste—and, in good truth, she had. From that hour Mrs. Grubb was consigned to the fate she was deemed to have richly merited—oblivion: and it may really be questioned whether in a few years she was not

absolutely forgotten. As the daughter of a small country rector, Miss Grant had not had the opportunity of moving in the higher class of society (except at Sir Francis Netherleigh's), and the other two young ladies did move in it. She had, in consequence, been already privately looked down upon by Elizabeth Cleveland—whose father, though a poor half-pay captain, was the Honourable Mr. Cleveland: and so, said Elizabeth, the girl had perhaps made a suitable match, after all, according to her station; all of which made it only the more easy to ignore Catherine Grubb's existence, and to forget that such a person had ever inhabited the civilised world. The next to marry was Elizabeth Cleveland. Her choice fell upon a spendthrift young peer, George Frederick Chenevix, Earl of Acorn: or, it may be more correct to say, his choice fell upon her. Margery Upton did not marry at all.

Years went on. Lord and Lady Acorn took care to keep up an intimacy with Sir Francis Netherleigh, privately hoping he would make the Earl his heir. The Earl needed it: he was a careless spendthrift. But Sir Francis never gave them, or any one else, the slightest sign of such an intention—and Lord Acorn's hopes were based solely on the fact that he had "nobody else to leave it to"; he had no male heir, or relative whatever, save himself. He, the Earl, chose to consider that he was a relative, in right of his wife.

Disappointment, however, as all have too often experienced, is the lot of man. Lord Acorn was fated to experience it in his turn. Sir Francis Netherleigh died: and, with the exception of legacies to servants, charities, and else, the whole of his property was left unconditionally to Margery Upton. Miss Upton, though probably as much surprised as anybody else, accepted the large bequest calmly, just as though it had been a matter of right, and she the heiress apparent; and she took up her abode at Court Netherleigh.

This was fourteen years ago: she was eight-and-thirty then; she was two-and-fifty now. Miss Upton had not wanted for suitors—as the world will readily believe: but she just shook her head and sent them adrift. It was her money they were after, not herself, she told them candidly; they had not thought of her when she was supposed to be portionless; they should not think of her now. Thus she had lived on at Court Netherleigh, and was looked upon as a somewhat eccentric lady; but a thoroughly good woman and kind mistress.

And the Acorns? They had swallowed their bitter disappointment with a good grace in public; and set themselves out to pay the same assiduous court to Miss Upton that they had paid to Sir Francis. "I don't think hers will be a long life," Lady Acorn said in confidence to her lord, "and then all the property must come to us; to you and to me: she has no other relative in the world." Common sense being common sense, the world at large took up the same notion, and Lord Acorn was universally regarded as the undoubted heir to the broad lands of Netherleigh. As to the peer himself,

nothing short of a revelation from heaven would have shaken his belief in the earnest of their future good fortune ; and, between ourselves, he had already borrowed money on the strength of it. Never did a more sanguine or less prudent man exist than he. The young ladies now staying with Miss Upton were his two youngest daughters. In the gushing affection professed for her by the family generally, the girls had been trained to call her "Aunt Margery": though, as the reader must perceive, she was not their aunt ; in fact, but very distantly related to them.

"Tiresome things!" cried Lady Frances, toying with the glass still, but looking towards the distant group of labourers. "I wish it had been the Dalrymples on their way here."

"You can put on your hats and go to Moat Grange, as you seem so anxious to see them," observed Miss Upton. "And you may ask the young people to come in this evening, if you like."

"Oh, that will be delightful," cried Frances, all alert in a moment. "And that young lady who was at church with them, Aunt Margery—are we to ask her also? They called her Miss Lynn."

"Of course you are. What strangely beautiful eyes she had."

"Thank you, Aunt Margery," whispered Adela, bending down with a kiss and a bright smile, as she passed Miss Upton. Not that Adela particularly cared for the Dalrymples ; but the days at Court Netherleigh were, to her, so monotonous.

The girls set forth in their pretty gipsy hats of straw, trimmed with a wreath of roses. It was not a lonely walk, cottages being scattered about all the way. When nearing the Grange they met a party coming from it : Selina and Alice Dalrymple, the latter slightly lame, and a young lady just come on a visit to them, Mary Isabel Lynn : a thoughtful girl with a fair face, a sweet countenance, and wonderful grey-blue eyes, from which you could hardly take your own. Gerard Hope was with them : a gay-natured young fellow, who was a Government clerk in London, and liked to run down to Moat Grange for Sundays as often as he could find a decent excuse for it.

"So you *are* here!" cried Frances to him, in her off-handed manner—and perhaps the thought that he might be there had been the secret cause of her impatience to meet the Dalrymples. "What have you to say for yourself, Mr. Gerard?—after protesting and vowing yesterday that the earliest morning train would not be surer to start than you!"

"Don't know what I shall say up there," returned Mr. Hope, nodding his head in the direction of London. "When I took French leave to stay over Monday last time they told me I should some day take it once too often."

"You can put it upon the shooting, you know, Gerard," interposed Selina. "No barbarous tyrant of a red-tape martinet could expect you to go up and leave the pheasants on the First of October. Put it to him whether he could."

"And he will ask you how many pair you bagged, and look round for those you have brought for himself—see if he does not," laughed Mary Lynn.

"But Gerard is not shooting," commented Frances.

"No," said Gerard, "these girls kept me. Now, Selina, don't deny it: you know you did."

"What a story!" retorted Selina. "If ever I met your equal, Gerard! You stayed behind of your own accord. Put it upon me, if you like. I know. It was not for me you stayed."

Frances Chenevix glanced at the delicate and too conscious face of Alice Dalrymple. Mr. Gerard Hope was a general admirer: but these two girls, Frances and Alice, were both rather dear to him—one of them, however, more so than the other. Were they destined to be rivals? Frances gave Miss Margery's invitation; and it was eagerly accepted: but not by Gerard. He really had to start for town by the midday train.

"Will Miss Margery extend her invitation to Oscar, do you think?" asked Alice, in her quiet voice. "He is staying with us."

"To be sure: the more, the merrier," assented Frances. "Not that Oscar is one of my especial favourites," added the free-speaking girl. "He is too solemn for me. Why, he is graver than a judge."

They all rambled on together. Gerard Hope and Frances somehow found themselves behind the others.

"*Why* did you stay to-day?" the girl asked him, in a low tone. "After saying yesterday that it was simply impossible!"

"Could not tear myself away," he whispered back again. "For one thing, I thought I might again see *you*."

"Are you playing at two games, Gerard?" continued Frances, giving him a keen glance. In truth, she would like to know.

"I am not playing at one game yet," answered the young man. "It would not do, you know."

"What would not do? As if anybody could make top or tail of your talk when you go in for obscurity!" she added, with a light laugh, as she gave a toss to her pretty hat.

"Were I to attempt to talk in language less obscure, I should soon be set down; therefore I never—we must conclude—shall go in for it," spoke he, in a strangely earnest tone. And, with that, Mr. Hope walked forward to join the others, leaving a line of pain on the fair open brow of Lady Frances Chenevix.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHOT.

THEY had brought down the pheasants in plenty: never had a First of October afforded better spoil: and they had lingered long at the sport, for evening was drawing on. Robert Dalrymple, the

head of the party and owner of Moat Grange—which was a desolate Grange enough, to look at, with the remains of a moat around it, long since filled in—aimed at the last bird he meant to hit that day, and missed it. He handed his gun to his gamekeeper.

“Shall I load again, sir?”

“No; we have done enough for one day, Hardy: and it is getting late. Come, Robert. Oscar, are you satisfied?”

“He must be greedy if he is not,” broke in the hearty voice of the Honourable and Reverend Thomas Cleveland, the Rector of Netherleigh, who had joined the shooting party, and who was related to Lady Acorn, though very distantly: for, some twenty years ago, the Earldom of Cleveland had lapsed to a distant branch.

“You will come home and dine with us, Cleveland,” spoke Mr. Dalrymple, as they turned their faces towards the Grange.

“What, in this trim? Mrs. Dalrymple would say I made myself free and easy.”

“Nonsense! You know we don’t stand upon ceremony. James will give your boots a brush. And, if you insist on being smart, I will lend you a coat.”

“You have lent me one before now. Thank you. Then I don’t care if I do,” concluded the Rector.

He had not time to go home and change his things. The Rectory and the Grange stood a good mile apart from each other, the village lying between them—and the dinner-hour was at hand. For the hours of that period were not the fashionable ones of these, when people dine at eight o’clock. Five o’clock was thought to be the proper hour then, or six at the latest, especially with unceremonious country people. As to parsons, they wore clothes cut as other people’s were cut, only that the coats were generally black.

“Look out, Robert,” cried Mr. Cleveland to young Dalrymple. “Stand away.” And, turning round, the Rector fired his gun in the air.

“What is that for?” demanded Oscar Dalrymple, a relative of the family, and staying for a day or two at the Grange.

“I never carry home my gun loaded,” was Mr. Cleveland’s answer. “I have too many young ones to risk it; they are in all parts of the house at once, putting their hands to everything. Neither do I think it fair to carry it into the house of a friend.”

Oscar Dalrymple drew down the corners of his mouth; it gave an unpleasing expression to his face, which was naturally cold. At that moment a bird rose within range; Oscar raised his piece, fired and brought it down. “That is how I like to waste good powder and shot,” said he.

“All right, Mr. Oscar,” was the Rector’s hearty answer. “To use it is better than to waste it, but to waste it is better than to run risks. Most of the accidents that happen with guns are caused by want of precaution.”

"Shall I draw your charge, Mr. Robert?" asked Hardy; who, as a good church-going man, had a reverence for all the Rector said, in the church and out of it.

"Draw the charge from *my* gun!" retorted Hardy's young master; not, however, speaking within ear-shot of Mr. Cleveland. "No. I can take care of my playthings, if others can't, Hardy," he added, with all the self-sufficiency of a young and vain man.

Presently there came up a substantial farmer, winding across the stubble towards his own house, which they were passing. He rented under Mr. Dalrymple.

"Famous good sport to-day, hasn't it been, Squire?" cried he, saluting his landlord.

"Famous. Never better. Will you accept a pair, Lee?" continued Mr. Dalrymple. "We have bagged plenty."

The farmer gladly took the pheasants. "I shall tell my daughters you shot them on purpose, Squire," said he jestingly.

"Do," interposed Robert, with a laugh. "Tell Miss Judith I shot them for her: in return for her sewing up that rent in my coat, the other day, and making me decent to go home. Is the fence, where I fell, mended yet?"

"Mended yet!" echoed Mr. Lee. "It was up again in an hour after you left, Mr. Robert."

"Ah! I know you are the essence of order and punctuality," returned Robert. "You must let me have the cost."

"Time enough for that," said the farmer. "'Twasn't much. Good afternoon, gentlemen; your servant, Squire."

"Oh—I say—Lee," called out Robert, as the farmer was turning homewards, whilst the rest of the party pursued their way, "about the mud in that weir? Hardy says it will hurt the fish to do it now."

"That's just what I told you, Mr. Robert."

"Well, then— But I'll come down to-morrow, and talk it over with you: I can't stop now."

"As you please, sir. I shall be somewhere about."

Robert Dalrymple turned too hastily. His foot caught against something sticking out of the stubble, and in saving himself he nearly dropped his gun. He recovered the gun with a jerk, but the trigger was touched, he never knew how, or with what, and the piece went off. A cry in front, a confusion, one man down, and the others gathered round him, was all Robert Dalrymple saw, as through a mist. He dropped the gun, started forward, and gave vent to a cry of anguish. For it was his father who had fallen.

The most collected was Oscar Dalrymple. He always was collected; his nature was essentially cool and calm. Holding up Mr. Dalrymple's head and shoulders, he strove to ascertain where the injury lay. Though very pale, and lying with closed eyes, Mr. Dalrymple had not fainted.

"Oh, father," cried Robert, with a wail of grief, as he threw

himself on his knees beside him, "I did not do it purposely—I don't know how it happened."

"Purposely—no, my boy," answered his father, in a kind tone, as he opened his eyes. "Cheer up, Charley." For, in fond moments, and at other odd times, they would call the boy by his second name, Charles: Robert often clashed with his father's.

"I do not believe there's much harm done," continued the sufferer. "I think the damage is in my left leg."

Mr. Dalrymple was right. The charge had entered the calf of the left leg. Oscar cut the leg of the trouser round at the knee with a pen-knife, unbuttoned the short gaiter, and drew them off, and the boot. The blood was running freely. As a matter of course, not a soul knew what ought to be done, whether anything or nothing, all being profoundly ignorant of the simple principles of surgery, but they stumbled to the conclusion that tying it up might stop the blood.

"Not that handkerchief," interposed Mr. Cleveland, as Oscar was about to apply Mr. Dalrymple's own, a red silk one. "Take mine: it is white, and linen. The first thing will be to get him home."

"The first thing must be to get a doctor," said Oscar.

"Of course. But we can move him home while the doctor is coming."

"My house is close at hand," said Farmer Lee. "Better move him there for the present."

"No, get me home," spoke up Mr. Dalrymple.

"The Squire thinks that home's home," commented the gamekeeper. "And so it is; 'specially when one's sick."

True enough. The difficulty was, how to get Mr. Dalrymple there. But necessity, as we all know, is the true mother of invention: and by the help of a mattress, procured from the farmer's, with impromptu bearings attached to it made of "webbing," as Mr. Lee's buxom daughter called some particularly strong tape she happened to have by her, the means were organised. Some labourers, summoned by Mr. Lee, were pressed into the service; with Oscar Dalrymple, the farmer, and the gamekeeper. These started with their load. Robert, in a state of distraction, had flown off for medical assistance; Mr. Cleveland volunteered to go forward and prepare Mrs. Dalrymple.

Mrs. Dalrymple, with her daughters and their guest, Mary Lynn, sat in one of the old-fashioned rooms of the Grange, they and the dinner alike awaiting the return of the shooting party. Old-fashioned as regarded its construction, and its carved-oak panelling, dark as mahogany, but handsome withal, and opening into a larger and lighter drawing-room. Mrs. Dalrymple, an agreeable woman of three or four-and-forty, had risen, and was bending over Miss Lynn's tambour frame, telling her it was growing too dusk to see. Selina Dalrymple was at the piano, trying a piece of new music, talking and laughing at the same time, and Alice, always more or less of an invalid, lay on her reclining sofa near the window.

"Here is Mr. Cleveland," exclaimed Alice, seeing him pass "I said he would be sure to come here to dinner, mamma."

Mrs. Dalrymple raised her head, and went, in her simple hospitable fashion, to open the hall door. He followed her back to the oak parlour, and stood just within it.

"What a long day you have had!" she exclaimed. "I think you must all be tired. Where are the others?"

"They are behind," replied the clergyman. He had been determining to make light of the accident, at the first telling; quite a joke of it; so as to prevent alarm. "We have bagged such a quantity, Mrs. Dalrymple: and your husband has asked me to dinner; and is going to accommodate me with a coat as well. Oh, but, talking of bagging, and dinner, and coats, I hope you have plenty of hot water in the house; baths, and all the rest of it. One of us has hurt his leg, and we may want no end of hot water to wash it."

"That is Charley, I know," said Selina. "He is always getting into some scrape. Look at what he did at Lee's last week."

"No; it is not Charley, for once. Guess again."

"Is it Oscar?"

"Oscar!" interposed Alice, from her sofa. "Oscar is too cautious to get hurt."

"What should you say to its being me?" said Mr. Cleveland, sitting down, and stretching out one leg, as if it were stiff and he could not bend it.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple, running forward with a foot-stool. "How did it happen? You ought not to have walked home."

"No," said he, "my leg is all right. It is Dalrymple's leg: he has hurt his a little."

"How did he do it? Is it the knee? Did he fall?" was reiterated around.

"It is nothing," interrupted Mr. Cleveland. "But we would not let him walk home. And I came on to tell you, lest you should be alarmed at seeing him brought in."

"Brought in!" echoed Mrs. Dalrymple. "How do you mean? Who is bringing him?"

"Hardy and Farmer Lee. Left to himself, he might have been for running here, leaping the ditches over the shortest cut; so we just made him lie down on a mattress, and they are carrying it. Miss Judith supplied us."

"Has he sprained his leg?"

"No," carelessly returned Mr. Cleveland. "He has managed to get a little shot into it; but ——"

"Shot!" interrupted Mrs. Dalrymple, in a frightened tone. "Shot?"

"It is nothing, I assure you. A very slight wound. He will be out with us in a week again."

"Oh, Mr. Cleveland!" she faintly cried. "Is it serious?"

"Serious!" laughed the well-intentioned clergyman. "My dear lady, don't you see how merry I am? The most serious part is the trousers. Oscar, taking alarm, like you, as to seriousness, decapitated their leg at the knee. They will never be fit to wear again," added Mr. Cleveland, with a grave face.

"We will turn them over to Robert's stock," said Selina. "I am sure, what with one random action or another, half his clothes are in ribands."

"How was it done?" inquired Alice.

"An accident," slightly replied Mr. Cleveland. "One never does know too well how such mishaps occur."

"We must send for a doctor," observed Mrs. Dalrymple, ringing the bell. "However slight it may be, I shall not know how to treat it."

"We thought of that, and Robert is gone for Forth," said the Rector as he turned away. In the passage he met Reuben, a staid, respectable man servant who had been in the family many years; his healthy face was ruddy as a summer apple, and his head, bald on the top, was sprinkled with powder. Mr. Cleveland told him what had happened; he then went to the back door, and stood there, looking out—his hands in the pockets of his velveteen coat. Selina came quietly up; she was trembling.

"Mr. Cleveland," she whispered, "is it not worse than you have said? I think you have been purposely making light of it. Pray tell me the truth. You know I am not excitable: I leave that to Alice."

"My dear, in one sense I made light of it, because I wished to prevent unnecessary alarm. But I assure you I do not fear it is any serious hurt."

"Was it papa's own gun that went off?"

"No."

"Whose, then?"

"Robert's."

"Oh!—but I might have known it," she added, her shocked tone giving place to one of anger. "Robert is guilty of carelessness every day of his life—of wanton recklessness."

"Robert is careless," acknowledged Mr. Cleveland. "You know, my dear, it is said to be a failing of the Dalrymples. But he has a good heart; and he is always so sorry for his faults."

"Yes, his life is made up of sinning and repenting."

"Sinning!"

"I call such carelessness sin," maintained Selina. "To think he should have shot papa!"

"My dear, you are looking at it in the worst aspect. I believe it will prove but a trifling injury. But, to see him borne here on a mattress, minus the leg of his pantaloons, and his own leg bandaged, might have frightened some of you into fits. You go back to the

oak parlour, Selina ; and don't let Alice run out of it at the first slight sound she may chance to hear."

Selina did as she was told : Mr. Cleveland stayed where he was. Very soon he distinguished the steady tread of feet approaching ; and at the same time he saw, to his surprise, the gig of the surgeon turning off from the road. How quick Robert had been !

Quick indeed ! Robert, as it proved, had met the surgeon's gig, himself and Dr. Tyler in it, a physician from the nearest town. They had been together to a consultation. Robert, light and slim, had got into the gig between them. He was now the first to get out ; and he began rushing about like a madman. The clergyman went forth and laid hands upon him.

"You will do more harm than you have already done, young sir, unless you can control yourself. Here have I been at the pains of impressing upon your mother and sisters that it is nothing more than a flea-bite, and you are going to upset it all ! Be calm before them, at any rate."

"Oh, Mr. Cleveland ! You talk of calmness ! Perhaps I have killed my father."

"I hope not. But I daresay a great deal depends on his being kept quiet and tranquil. Remember that. If you cannot," added Mr. Cleveland, walking him forward a few paces, "I will just march you over to the Rectory, and keep you there until all fear of danger is over."

Robert pulled his senses together with an effort. "I will be calm ; I promise you. Repentance," he continued bitterly, "will do *him* no good, so I had better keep it to myself. I wish I had shot off my own head first !"

"There you begin again ! *Will* you be quiet ?"

"Yes, I will. I'll go and stamp about where nobody can see me, and get rid of myself in that way."

He escaped from Mr. Cleveland, made his way to the kitchen garden, and began striding about amid the autumn cabbages. Poor Robert ! he really felt as though it would be a mercy if his head were off. He was good-hearted, generous, and affectionate, but thoughtless and impulsive.

As the gamekeeper was departing, after helping to carry the mattress upstairs, he caught sight of his young master's restless movements, and went to him.

"Ah, Mr. Robert, it's bad enough, but racing about won't do no good. If you had but let me draw that there charge ! Mr. Cleveland's ideas is sure to be right : the earl's always was, afore him."

Robert went on "racing" about worse than before, clearing a dozen cabbages at a stride. "How did my father bear the transport home, Hardy ?"

"Pretty well. A bit faintish he got."

"Hardy, I will *never* touch a gun again."

"I don't suppose you will, Mr. Robert—not till the next time. You may touch 'em, sir, but you must be more careful of 'em."

Robert groaned.

"This is the second accident of just the same sort that I have been in," continued Hardy. "The other was at the earl's, when I was a youngster. Not Mr. Cleveland's father, you know, sir; t'other earl afore him, over at t'other place. Two red-coat blades had come down there for a week's sport, and one of 'em (he seemed to us keepers as if he had never handled a gun in all his born days) got the shot into the other's calf—just as it has been got this evening into the squire's. That was a worse accident, though, than this will be, I hope. He was laid up at the inn, close by where it happened, for six weeks, for they thought it best not to carry him to the Hall, and then——"

"And then—did it terminate fatally?" interrupted Robert, scarcely above his breath.

"Law, no, sir! At the end of the six weeks he was on his legs, as strong as ever, and went back to London—or wherever it was he came from."

Robert Dalrymple drew a relieved breath. "I shall go in and hear what the surgeons say," said he, restlessly. "And you go round to the kitchen, Hardy, and tell them to give you some tea; or anything else you'd like."

Miss Lynn was in the oak parlour alone, standing before the fire, when Robert entered.

"Oh, Robert," she said, "I wanted to see you. Do you fear this will be very bad?—very serious?"

"I don't know," was the desponding answer.

"Whose gun was it that did the mischief?"

"Whose gun! Have you not heard?" he broke forth, in a tone of fierce self-reproach. "MINE, of course. And if he dies, I shall have murdered him."

Mary Lynn was used to Robert's heroics; but she looked terribly grieved now.

"I see what you think, Mary," he said, in the mood to view all things in a gloomy light: "that you will be better without me than with me. Cancel our engagement, if you will. I cannot say that I do not deserve it."

"No, Robert, I was not thinking of that," she answered. Tears had risen to her eyes, glistening in the fire light. "I was wondering whether I could say or do anything to induce you to be less thoughtless; less ——"

"Less like a fool. Say it out, Mary."

"You are anything but that, and you know it. Only you will act so much upon impulse. You think, speak, move, and act without the slightest deliberation or forethought. It is all random impulse."

"Impulse could hardly have been at fault here, Mary. It was a horrible accident, and I shall deplore it to the last hour of my life."

"How did it happen?"

"I cannot tell. I had been speaking with Lee, gun in hand, and was turning short round to catch up the others, when the gun went off. Possibly the trigger caught my coat sleeve—I cannot tell. Yes, that was pure accident, Mary: but there's something worse connected with it."

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Cleveland had just before fired off his gun because he would not bring it indoors, loaded. Hardy asked if he should draw the charge from mine, and I answered him, mockingly, that I could take good care of it. Why did I not let him do it?" added the young man beginning to stride the room in his remorse as he had previously been striding the bed of cabbages. "What an idiot I was!—a wicked, self-sufficient imbecile! You had better give me up at once, Mary."

She turned and glanced at him with a smile. It brought him back to her side, and he laid his hands on her shoulders and looked into her eyes by the light of the fire.

"It may be to your interest," he whispered in agitation. "Some day I may be shooting you, in one of my careless moods. What do you say, Mary?"

She said nothing. She only leaned slightly forward and smiled. Robert threw his arms around her, and strained her to him in all the fervency of a first affection. "My darling, my darling! Mary, you are too good for me."

They were nice looking young people, both of them, and in love with one another. Robert was three-and-twenty; she only nineteen; and the world looked fair before them. But, that she was too good for him, was a greater truth than Mr. Robert thought.

Stir was heard in the house now; the medical men were coming downstairs. Their report was favourable. The bleeding had been stopped, the shots extracted, and there was no appearance of danger. A little confinement, perfect quiet and proper treatment, would, they hoped, soon set all to rights again.

Dinner had not been thought of. When the cook had nearly succumbed to despair, and Mr. Dalrymple had dropped into a calm sleep, and the anxious ones were gathered together in the oak parlour, Reuben came in, and said the soup was on the table.

"Then I will wish you all a good appetite, and be gone," said the Rector to Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Indeed you will not go without some dinner."

"I am in a pretty state for dinner," said he, "and I can't worry Dalrymple over coats now. Look at me."

"Oh, Mr. Cleveland! do you think we shall regard your coat! Is this a time to be fastidious? We are not much dressed ourselves."

"No?" said the Rector, regarding them. "I am sure you all look well. You are not in shooting jackets and gaiters and inch-thick boots."

"I am going to sit down as I am," interrupted Robert, who had not changed a thing since he came in. "A fellow with a dreadful care at his heart has not the pluck to put on a dandy-cut coat."

Mrs. Dalrymple ended the matter by taking the Rector's arm and bearing him off to the dining-room. The rest followed. Oscar met them in the hall—dressed. He was a small, spare man, cool and self-contained in all emergencies, and fastidious in his habits, even to the putting on of proper coats. His colourless face was rather unpleasant at times, though its features were good, the eyes cold and light, the drawn-in lips thin. Catching Selina's hand, he took her in.

It was a lively dinner table, after all. Hope had arisen in every heart, and Mr. Cleveland was at his merriest. He had great faith in cheerful looks round a sick-bed, and he did not want desponding ones to be displayed to his friend, Dalrymple.

Before the meal was over, a carriage was heard to approach the house. It contained Miss Upton. The news of the accident had spread; it had reached Court Netherleigh; and Miss Upton got up from her own dinner table and ordered her carriage. She came in, all concern, penetrating to the midst of them in her unceremonious way.

"And the fault was *Robert's*!" she exclaimed, after listening to the recital, as she turned her condemning eyes upon the culprit. "I am sorry to hear *that*."

"You cannot blame me as I blame myself, Miss Upton," he said, ingenuously, a moisture dimming his eyes. "I am always doing wrong; I know that. But this time it was really an accident that might have happened to anyone. Even to Oscar, with all his prudence."

"I beg your pardon, young man; you are wrong there," returned Miss Upton. "Oscar Dalrymple would have taken care to hold his gun so that it *could not* go off unawares. Never you fear that he will shoot anybody. I hope and trust your father will get well, Robert Dalrymple; and I hope you will let this be a lesson to you."

"I mean it to be one," humbly answered Robert.

Miss Upton carried the three young ladies back to Court Netherleigh, leaving Oscar and Robert to follow on foot: no reason why they should not go, she answered, and it would serve to keep the house quiet for its master.

"Will it prove of serious consequence, this hurt?" she took an opportunity of asking aside of Mr. Cleveland, as she was going out to the carriage.

"No, I hope not. I think not. It is only a few stray shots in the leg."

"I don't like those stray shots in the leg, mind you," returned Miss Upton.

"Neither do I, in a general way," confessed the Rector.

Thinking of this, thinking of that, Miss Upton was silent during the drive home. But it never did, or could, enter into her imagination to suppose that the fair girl, with the sweet and thoughtful grey-

blue eyes, sitting opposite her—eyes that somehow did not seem altogether unfamiliar to her memory—was the daughter of that friend of her girlhood, Catherine Grant.

CHAPTER III.

LEFT TO ROBERT.

THE eighth day after the accident to Mr. Dalrymple was a day of rejoicing, for he was so far recovered as to be up for some hours. A sofa was drawn before the fire, and he lay on it. The symptoms had all along been favourable, and he now merrily told them that if anybody had written to order him a cork leg, he thought it might be countermanded. Mr. Cleveland, a frequent visitor, privately decided that the thanksgiving for his recovery might be offered up in church on the following Sunday—such being the custom in the good and simple place. They all rejoiced with him, paying his chamber visits by turns. Alice and Miss Lynn had been in together during the afternoon: when they were leaving, he beckoned the latter back, but Alice did not notice, and went limping from the room. Any great trouble affected her spirits sadly, and her lameness would then be more conspicuous.

“Do you want me to do anything for you?” asked Mary, returning, and bending over the sofa.

“Yes,” said Mr. Dalrymple, taking possession of both her hands, and looking up with an arch smile, “I want you to tell me what the secret is between you and that graceless Robert.”

Mary Lynn’s eyes drooped, and her face grew scarlet. She was unable to speak.

“*Won’t* you tell me?” repeated Mr. Dalrymple.

“Has he been—saying anything to you, sir?” she faltered.

“Not he. Not a word. Somebody else told me they saw he and Miss Lynn had a secret between them, which might possibly bear results some day.”

She burst into tears, got one of her hands free, and held it before her face.

“Nay, my dear,” he kindly said, “I did not wish to make you uncomfortable; quite the contrary. I want just to say one thing, child: that if you and he are wishing to talk secrets to one another, I and my wife will not say nay to it: and from a word your mother dropped to me the last time I was in town, I don’t think she would, either. Dry up your tears, Mary; it is a laughing matter, not a crying one. Robert is frightfully random at times, but he is good as gold at heart. I invite you and him to drink tea with me this evening. There.”

Mary escaped, half smiles, half tears. And she and Robert had tea with Mr. Dalrymple that evening. He took it early since his

illness ; six o'clock. Mary made the tea, and he waited on his father, who was then in bed. When the tea was cleared away, Mary went with it ; Robert remained.

"This might have been an unlucky shot, Charley," Mr. Dalrymple suddenly observed,

"Oh, father ! do not talk about it. I am so thankful !"

"But I am going to talk about it. To tell you why it would have been so unlucky, had it turned out differently. This accident has made me remember the uncertainty of life, if I never remembered it before. Put the candles off the table ; I don't like them right in my eyes ; and bring a chair here to the bedside. Get the lotion before you sit down."

Robert did what was required, and took his seat.

"When I married, Robert, I was only the second brother, and no settlement was made on your mother : I had nothing to settle. The post I had in London in what you young people are now pleased to call the red-tape office, brought me in six hundred a year, and we married on that, to rub on as we best could. And I daresay we should have rubbed on very well," added Mr. Dalrymple, in a sort of parenthesis, "for our desires were simple, and we were not likely to go beyond our income. However, when you were about two years old, Moat Grange fell to me, through the death of my elder brother."

"What was the cause of his death ?" interrupted Robert. "He must have been a young man."

"Eight-and-twenty only. It was young. I gave up my post in town and we came to Moat Grange ——"

"But what did Uncle Claude die of?" asked Robert again. "I don't remember to have heard."

"Never mind what. It was an unhappy death, and we have not cared to speak of it. Moat Grange is worth about two thousand a year : and we have been doing wrong, in one respect, ever since we came to it, for we have put nothing by."

"Why should you have put by, father?"

"There ! That is an exemplification of your random way of speaking and thinking. Moat Grange is entailed upon you, every shilling of it."

"Well, it will be enough for me—with what I have," said Robert.

"I hope it will. But it would have been anything but well had I died ; for, in that case your mother and sisters would have been beggars."

"Oh, father !"

"Yes ; all would have lapsed to you. Let me go on. Claude Dalrymple left many debts behind him, some of them cruel ones, personal ones—we will not enter into that. I—moved by a chivalrous feeling perhaps, but which I and your mother have never repented of—took those personal debts upon me, and paid them off by degrees."

"I should have done the same," cried impulsive Robert.

"And the estate had of course to be kept up, for I would not have it said that Moat Grange suffered by its change of owners, and your mother thought with me; so that altogether we had a struggle for it, and were positively less at our ease for ready money here than we had been in our little household in London. When the debts were cleared off, and we had breathing time, I began to think of saving; but I am sorry to say it was only thought of; not done. The cost of educating you children increased as you grew older; Alice's illness came on and was a great and continued expense; and, what with one thing and another, we never did, or have, put by. Your expenses at college were enormous."

"Were they," returned Robert, indifferently.

"Were they!" echoed Mr. Dalrymple, almost in a sharp tone. "Do you forget that you also ran into debt there, like your Uncle Claude?"

"Not much, was it, sir?" cried Robert deprecatingly, who remembered very little about the matter, beyond the fact that the bills had gone in to Moat Grange.

"Pretty well," returned Mr. Dalrymple, with a cough. "The sum total averaged between six and seven hundred a year, for every year that you were there."

"Surely not!" uttered Robert, startled to contrition.

"It seems to have made but little impression on you; you knew it at the time. But I am not recalling this, to cast reproach on you now, Robert: I only wanted to explain how it is that we have been unable to put by. Not a day after I am well will I delay beginning it. We will curtail our expenses, even in things hitherto considered necessary, no matter what the neighbourhood may think; and I shall probably insure my life. Your mother and I were talking of this all day yesterday."

"I can do with less than I spend, father; I will make the half of it do," said Robert, in one of his fits of impulse.

"We shall see that," said Mr. Dalrymple, with another cough. "But you do not know the trouble this has been to me since the accident, Robert. I have lain here, and dwelt incessantly upon the helpless condition of your mother and sisters—left helpless on your hands—should I be called away."

"My dear father, it need not trouble you. Do you suppose I should ever wish to disturb my mother and sisters in the possession of their home? What do you take me for?"

"Ah, Robert, these generous resolves are easily made; but circumstances more often than not mar them. You will be wanting a home of your own—and a wife."

Robert's face took a very conscious look. "Time enough for that, sir."

"If you and Mary Lynn can both think so."

"You—don't—object to her, do you, sir?" came the deprecating question.

"No, indeed I don't object to her: except on one score," replied Mr. Dalrymple. "That she is too good for you."

Robert laughed. "I told her that myself, and asked her to give me up. It was the night of the accident, when I was so truly miserable."

"Well, Robert, you could not have chosen a better girl than Mary Lynn. She will have money——"

"I'm sure I have not thought whether she will or not," interrupted Robert, quite indignantly.

"Of course not; I should be surprised if you had," said Mr. Dalrymple, in the satirical tone his son disliked. "Common-place ways and means, pounds, shillings, and pence, are beneath the exalted consideration of young Mr. Dalrymple. I should not wonder but you would set up to live upon air to-morrow, if you had nothing else to live upon."

"Well, father, you know what I meant—that I am not mercenary."

"I should be sorry if you were. But when we contemplate the prospect of a separate household, it is sometimes necessary to consider how its bread-and-cheese will be provided."

"I have the two hundred a year that my own property brings in—that Aunt Cecily left me; there's that to begin with."

"And I will allow you three or four hundred more; Mary will bring something and be well-off later. Yes, Robert, I think you may set up your tent if you will. I like young men to marry young. I did myself—at three-and-twenty: your present age. Your Uncle Claude did not, and ran into folly. And, Robert, I should advise you to begin and read for the Bar. Better have a profession."

"I did begin, you know, father."

"And came down here when you were ill with that fever, and never went up again. Moat Grange will be yours eventually ——"

"Not for these twenty years, I hope, father," impulsively interrupted Robert. "You are spared to us, and I can never be sufficiently thankful for it. Why, in twenty years you would not be an old man; not seventy."

"I am thankful, too, Robert; thankful that my life is not cut off in its midst—as it might have been. The future of your mother and sisters has been a thorn in my side since I was brought face to face with death. In health we are apt to be fearfully careless."

"Hear me, father," cried Robert, rising, and speaking with emotion. "Had the worst happened, they should have been my first care: I declare it to you. First and foremost, even before Mary Lynn."

"My boy, I know your heart. Are you going down? That's right. I think I have talked enough. Bring a light here first. My leg is very uneasy."

"Does it pain you," inquired Robert, who had noticed that his father was getting restless. "How tight the bandage is! The leg appears to be swollen."

"The effect of the bandage being tight," remarked Mr. Dalrymple. "Loosen it, and put plenty of lotion on."

"It feels very hot," were Robert's last words.

The evening went on. Just before bed time, the young people were all sitting round the fire in the oak parlour, Mrs. Dalrymple being with her husband. So assured did they now feel of no ill results ensuing, that they had got to speak lightly of it—not of the accident: none would have been capable of that—but of the circumstances attending it. Selina had just been recommending Robert never in future to touch any weapon stronger than a popgun.

"I don't mean to," said Robert.

"What a long conference you had with papa to-night, after Mary came down," went on Selina. "What was it about, Robert? Were you getting a lesson how to carry loaded guns?"

"Not that," put in Oscar Dalrymple. "Robert has learnt that lesson by heart. He was getting some hints how to manage Moat Grange."

Robert looked up quickly, almost believing Oscar must have been behind the chamber wall.

"Your father has come so very near to losing it," added Oscar. "A chance like that brings reflection."

"Only to think of it!" breathed Alice—"that we have been so near losing the Grange! If dear papa had died it would have come to Robert."

"Ay, all Robert's; neither yours nor your mother's," mused Oscar. "I daresay the thought has worried Mr. Dalrymple."

"I know it has," said Robert, in his hasty way. "But there was no occasion for it."

"No, thank Heaven!" breathed Selina.

"However things had turned out, my father might have been easy on that score. And we were talking of you," added Robert, in a whisper, to Mary Lynn, while making believe to regard attentively the sofa cushion at her ear. "And of setting up our tent, Mary; and of ways and means—and I am to go on reading for the Bar. It all looks *couleur de rose*."

"Robert," returned Alice, "should you have sent us adrift, had you come into the old homestead?"

"To be sure I should, in double-quick time," answered he, tilting Alice's chair back to kiss her, and keeping it in that position. "'Sharp the word and quick the motion' it would have been with me then. I should have paid a premium with you both and shipped you off by an emigrant ship to some old Turkish Sultan who buys wives, so that you might never trouble me or the Grange again."

"And mamma, Robert?"

"Oh, mamma—I *might*, perhaps, have allowed her to stop here," conceded Robert, with a mock serious face. "On condition that she acted as my housekeeper."

They all laughed: they were secure in the love of Robert. In the

midst of which, the young man felt somebody touch his shoulder. It was Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Dearest mamma," said he, letting Alice and her chair go forward to their natural position, and stepping backwards, laughing still. "Did you hear what we were saying?"

"Yes, Robert, I heard it," she sighed. "Have you a mind for a drive to-night?"

"A drive!" exclaimed Robert. "To find the emigrant ship?"

"I have told James to get the gig ready. He can go, if you do not, but I thought you might be the quicker driver. It is to bring Mr. Forth. Some change for the worse has taken place in your father."

All their mirth was forgotten instantly. They sat speechless.

"He complained, just now, of the bandage being too tight, and said Robert had pretended to loosen it, but must have only fancied that he did so," continued Mrs. Dalrymple, speaking to them generally. "It is much inflamed and swollen, and he cannot bear the pain. I fear," she added, sitting down and bursting into tears, "that we have reckoned on his recovery too soon—that it is far off yet."

Robert flew on the wings of the wind, and soon brought back Mr. Forth. Mrs. Dalrymple and Oscar went with the surgeon to the sick chamber. Uncovering the leg, he held the wax light close to examine it. One look, and he glanced up with a too expressive face.

Oscar, always observant, noticed it; nobody else. Mrs. Dalrymple asked the cause of the change, the sudden heat and pain.

"It is a change—that—does—sometimes come on," drawled Mr. Forth, who of course, as a medical man, would have protested against danger had he known his patient was going to drop out of his hands the next moment but one.

"That redness about it," said Mr. Dalrymple, "that's new."

"A touch of erysipelas," remarked the surgeon.

His manner soothed them, and the vague feeling of alarm subsided. None of them looked to the worst side—and a day or two passed on. Dr. Tyler came again now as well as Mr. Forth.

One morning when the doctors were driving out of the stable-yard—that way was more convenient to the high road than the front entrance—they met Mr. Cleveland. Mr. Forth pulled up, and the Rector leaned on the gig while he talked to them, one hand on the wing, the other on the dash-board.

"How is he this morning?"

"We were speaking of you, sir," replied Mr. Forth: "saying that you, as Mr. Dalrymple's chief friend, would be the best to break the news at the Grange. There is no hope."

"No hope of his life?"

"None. A day or two must terminate it."

Mr. Cleveland was inexpressibly shocked. He could not at first speak. "This is very sudden, gentlemen."

"Not particularly so. At least, not to us. We have done all in our power, but it has mastered us. Will you break it to him?"

"Yes," he answered, quitting them. "It is a hard task; but somebody must do it." And he went straight to Mr. Dalrymple.

In the evening, Robert, who had been away all day on some matter of business, returned. As he went to his father's room to report what he had done, his mother came out of it. She had her handkerchief to her face: Robert supposed she was afraid of draughts. He approached the bed.

Mr. Dalrymple, looking flushed and restless, took Robert's hand and held it in his. "Have they told you the news, my boy?"

"No," answered Robert, never thinking of the true meaning of the words. "Is there any?"

Robert Dalrymple the elder gazed at him; a yearning gaze. And an uneasy sensation stole over his son.

"I am going to leave you, Robert."

He understood, and sank down by the side of the bed. It was as if a thunderbolt had struck him: and one that would leave its trace throughout life.

"Father! It cannot be!"

"In a day or two, Robert. That is all of time they can promise me now."

He cried out with a low, wailing cry, and let his head drop on the counterpane beside his father.

"You must not take it too much to heart, my son. Remember: that is one of my dying injunctions."

"I wish I could die for you, father!" he passionately uttered. "I shall never forgive myself."

"I forgive you heartily and freely, Robert. My boy, see you not that this must be God's good will. I could die in peace but for the thought of your mother and sisters. I can but leave them to you: will you take care of and cherish them?"

He lifted his head, speaking eagerly. "I will, I will. They shall be my only care. Father, this shall ever be their home. I swear——"

"Be silent, Robert!" interrupted Mr. Dalrymple, his voice raised in emotion. "How dare you? *Never take a rash oath.*"

"I mean to fulfil it, father; just as though I had taken it. This shall ever be my mother's home. But, oh, to lose you thus! My father, say once more that you do forgive me. Oh, father, forgive and bless me before you die!"

Death came, all too surely; and the neighbourhood, struck with consternation, grieved sincerely for Mr. Dalrymple.

"If Mr. Robert had but let me draw that charge from his gun, the Squire would have been here now," bewailed Hardy the gamekeeper.

(To be continued.)

WRITE SOON.

"Write soon, my dearest!" In the tender gloaming,
 While flowers are closing, tremulous and low,
 Fall the dear words, and his brown fingers roaming
 O'er the young cheek where girlhood's roses blow,
 Steal from a wealth of golden sun-kissed tresses
 A ribbon blue as are the summer skies :

"Write soon," she murmurs 'neath his fond caresses,
 And tears are trembling in her downcast eyes.

"Write soon, my love! for life will be so weary,
 Counting the hours when thou art here no more—
 Watching the road so silent, grey, and dreary—
 Weaving vague pictures of that distant shore
 Where thou art wandering, restless, sad, and lonely,
 Waiting for tidings o'er the mighty deep :
 Write soon, my love! in that dark hour, if only
 One line, to soothe me while I wait and weep."

"Write soon, my darling!" Oft in accents broken
 These words are whispered in the careless ear—
 Mingled with tears, in hurried moments spoken,
 Breathing a world of loving hope and fear.
 Mother and son in the first grief of parting,
 He, in the glory of his manhood's noon,
 Checks the weak tears that to his eyes are starting,
 While she is pleading, "Oh, write soon! write soon!"

"Write soon, my boy! think of thy mother yearning
 And fondly hoping for one word from thee,
 To say thy heart, unchanged, is ever turning
 From the world's flattery, to home and me.
 Think of thy mother's cot, when fairer places
 Unfold their beauties to thy wondering eyes—
 Write soon, my boy! and say if dear home faces
 Smile through thy brightest dreams 'neath alien skies?"

* * * * *

When night descends on the red field of battle,
 Veiling the slain—a pale and sickening sight—
 When swords are sheathed and cannons cease to rattle,
 Stern faces quiver in the camp-fires' light ;
 They read aloud a crumpled, blood-stained letter,
 Scrawled by the light of the uncertain moon :
 "I have been wounded, but shall soon be better ;
 Fond love to all—and, oh! write soon! write soon!"

Write soon! write soon! loved faces, worn with sorrow,
 Bend, white and tearful, o'er a lock of hair ;
 Hoping, in vain, that rose-hued dawn, to-morrow,
 May bring an answer to their fervent prayer.
 Through every land these simple words are ringing—
 Who hath not joined this universal tune ?
 Till time shall cease, some soft low voice is singing :
 "Write soon, my dearest! Oh! write soon! write soon!"

FANNY FORRESTER.

THE STORY OF DOROTHY GRAPE.

ACCORDING to Mrs. Todhetley's belief, some people are born to be unlucky. Not only individuals, but whole families. "I have noticed it times and again, Johnny, in going through life," she has said to me: "ill luck in some way lies upon them, and upon all they do; they *cannot* prosper, from their cradle to their grave." That there will be some compensating happiness for these people hereafter—for they do exist—is a belief we all like to cherish.

I am now going to tell of people in rather humble life whom this ill-luck seemed to attend. *That* might never have brought the family into notice, ups and downs being so common in the world: but two mysterious disappearances occurred in it, which caused them to be talked of; and those occurrences I must relate before coming to Dorothy's proper history. They took place before my time; in fact when Squire Todhetley was a young man, and it is from him that I repeat it.

At this end of the village of Islip, going into it from Crabb, there stood on the right hand side of the road a superior cottage residence, with lovely yellow roses intertwining themselves about its porch. Robert Grape and his wife lived in it, who were well enough to do. He was in the "post-horse duty," the Squire said—whatever that might mean—and she had money on her own account. The cottage was hers absolutely, and nearly one hundred a year income. The latter, however, was only an annuity and would die with her.

There were two children living: Dorothy, softened by her friends into Dolly; and Thomas. Two others, who came between them, went off in what Mrs. Grape used to call a "galloping consumption." Dolly's cheeks were bright and her eyes blue, and her soft brown hair fell back in curls from her dimpled face. All the young men about, including the Squire, admired the little girl; more than their mothers did, who said she was growing up vain and light-headed. Perhaps she might be; but she was a modest, well-behaved little maiden. She went to school by day, as did her brother.

Mr. Grape's occupation, connected with the "post-horse duty," appeared to consist of driving about the country in a gig. These journeys used to take about three weeks; when he would come home for a short interval, and go off again.

One Monday morning in summer, when the sun was shining on the yellow roses and the dew glittered on the grass, Robert Grape was about to start on one of these journeys. Passing out to his gig, which waited at the gate, he stopped to pluck a rose. Dolly followed him out. She was sixteen now and had left school.

"Take care your old horse does not fall this time, father," spoke she, gaily and lightly.

"I'll take care, lass : if I can," he answered.

"The truth is, Robert, you want a new horse," said Mrs. Grape, speaking from the open door.

"I know I do, Mary Ann. Old Jack's no longer to be trusted."

"Shall you be at Bridgenorth to-morrow?"

"No ; on Wednesday evening. Good-bye once more. You may expect me home at the time I've said." And, with those last words he got into his gig and drove away.

From that day, from that hour, Robert Grape was never more seen by his family. Neither did they hear from him : but he did not, as a rule, write to them when on his journeys. They said to one another what delightful weather he was having this time, and the days passed pleasantly until the Saturday of his expected return.

But he did not come. Mrs. Grape had prepared a favourite dinner of his for the Sunday, lamb and peas, and a lemon cheesecake. They had to eat it without him. Three or four more days passed and still they saw nothing of him. Mrs. Grape was not at all uneasy.

"I think, children, he must have been mistaken in a week," she said to Dolly and Tom. "It must be next Saturday that he meant. I shall expect him then."

He did not come. And the following week Mrs. Grape wrote a letter to the inn at Bridgenorth, where he was in the habit of putting-up, asking when he had left it, and for what town.

Startling tidings came in answer. Mr. Grape had left the place nearly four weeks ago, leaving his horse and gig at the inn. He had not yet returned for them. Mrs. Grape could not make it out ; she went off to Worcester to take the stage coach for Bridgenorth, and there made enquiries.

On Wednesday evening, the next day but one after leaving his home, Mr. Grape approached Bridgenorth. Upon entering the town, the horse started and fell : his master was thrown out of the gig, but not hurt ; the shafts were broken and the horse lamed. "A pretty kettle of fish, this is," cried Mr. Grape in his good-humoured way to the ostler, when the damaged cavalcade reached the inn : "I shall have to take a week's holiday now, I suppose." The man's answer was to the effect that the old horse was no longer of much good ; Mr. Grape nodded assent, and remarked that he must be upon the look-out for another.

In the morning, he quitted the inn on foot, leaving the horse to the care of the veterinary surgeon, who said it would be four or five days before he would be fit to travel, and the gig to have its shafts repaired. Mr. Grape observed to the landlord that he should take the opportunity to go on a little expedition, which otherwise he could not have found time for, and should be back before the horse was well. But he never had come back. This was recounted to Mrs. Grape.

"He did not give any clue as to where he was going," added the

landlord ; " he started away with nothing but his umbrella and what he might have put in his pockets, saying he should walk the first stage of his journey. His portmanteau is up in his bed-room now."

All this sounded very curious to Mrs. Grape. It was unlike her open, out-speaking husband. She enquired whether it was likely that he had been injured in the fall from the gig and be lying ill somewhere.

The landlord shook his head. " He said he was not hurt a bit," replied he, " and he did not seem to be. He eat a good supper that night and made a famous breakfast in the morning."

An idea flashed across Mrs. Grape's mind as she listened. " I think he must have gone off for a ramble amidst the Welsh mountains. He was always saying how much he should like to go there."

" May be so," assented the landlord. " Them Welsh mountains be pleasant to look upon ; but if a mist comes on, or one meets with an awk'ard pass, or anything o' that—well, ma'am, let's hope we shall see him back yet."

Mrs. Grape went home in miserable uncertainty. She did not give up hope ; she thought he must be lying ill amongst the mountains, perhaps had caught a fever and lost his senses. As the days and the weeks passed on, there set in a kind of nervous expectancy. Tidings of him might come to her any day, living or dead. A sudden knock at the door made her jump ; if the postman by some rare chance paid them a visit—for letters were not written in those days by the bushel—it set her trembling. More than once she had hastily risen in the middle of the night, believing she heard a voice calling to her outside the cottage. But tidings never came.

That was disappearance the first.

In the spring of the following year Mrs. Grape sold her pretty homestead and removed to Worcester. Circumstances had changed. Beyond what little means had been, or could be, saved, the children would have nothing to help them on in the world. Tom, thirteen years old now, must have a twelvemonth's good schooling before being placed at some business. Dolly must learn a trade by which to get her living. In those days, young people who were not specially educated for it, or of humble birth, did not dream of making themselves into governesses.

" You had better go to the mantua-making, Dolly," said Mrs. Grape. " It's nice, genteel work."

Dolly drew a wry face. " I should not make much hand at that, mother."

" But what else is there ? You'd not like the stay-making ——"

" Oh dear, no."

" Or to serve in a pastry-cook's shop, or that. I should not like to see you in a shop, myself ; you are too—too giddy," added Mrs. Grape, pulling herself up from saying too pretty. " I think it must be

the mantua-making, Dolly : you'll make a good enough hand at it, once you've learnt it. Why not ? ”

The house rented by Mrs. Grape at Worcester was near the London road. It was semi-detached, and built, like its fellow, in rather a peculiar way, as though the architect found himself cramped for space in width but had plenty of it in depth. It was close to the road, about a yard only of garden ground lying between. The front door opened into the sitting-room ; not a very uncommon case then with houses of its class. It was a fair-sized room, light and pretty, the window being beside the door. Another door, opposite the window, led to the rest of the house : a small back parlour, a kitchen, three rooms above stairs, with a yard and strip of garden at the back. It was a comfortable house, at a small rent ; and, once Mrs. Grape had disposed her tasty furniture about it to advantage, she tried to feel at home and to put aside her longing to be back under the old roof at Islip.

In the adjoining house dwelt two quaker ladies named Deavor, an aunt and niece, the latter a year or two older than Dolly. They showed themselves very friendly to the new comers, and the two families became intimate neighbours.

Dolly, seventeen now, was placed with Miss Pedley, one of the first dressmakers in the city, as out-door apprentice. She was bound to her for three years, and went to and fro daily. Tom was day-scholar at a gentleman's school in the neighbourhood.

One Saturday evening, when they had been about three months in their new abode, Mrs. Grape was sitting at the table in the front-room, making up a cap for herself ; Tom sat by her, doing his lessons ; Dolly was near the open window, nursing a grey kitten. Tom looked as hot as the evening, as he turned over the books before him with a puzzled face. He was a good-looking boy, with soft brown eyes and a complexion as brilliant as his sister's.

“ I say, mother,” cried he, “ I don't think this Latin will be of much good to me. I shan't make any hand at it.”

“ You will be like me then, Tom, for I'm sure I shall never make much of a hand at dressmaking,” spoke up Dolly. “ Miss Pedley sees it too.”

“ Be quiet, Dolly ; don't talk nonsense,” said Mrs. Grape. “ Let Tom finish his tasks.”

Thus reprimanded, silence supervened again. It grew dusk ; candles were lighted and the window was shut down, as the breeze whiffled their flame ; but the bright moonlight still streamed in. Presently Dolly left the room to give the kitten its supper of milk. Tom shut up his books with a bang.

“ Finished, Tom ? ”

“ Yes, mother.”

He was putting them away when a knock came to the front door. Tom opened it.

"Halloa, Bill!" said he.

"Halloa, Tom!" responded a boy's voice. "I say, Tom, I'm come up to ask if you'll go fishing with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" echoed Tom in surprise. "Why, to-morrow's Sunday!"

"Bother! I mean Monday. I'm going up to the Weir at Powick: there's first-rate fishing there. Will you come, Tom Grape?"

Mrs. Grape wondered who the boy was; she knew the voices of some of Tom's schoolfellows, but did not recognise this one. Tom, standing on the low step outside, had partly drawn to the door behind him, and she could not see out; but she heard every word as plainly as though the speakers had been in the room.

"I should like to go, but I'm sure I could never get leave from school," said Tom. "Why, the midsummer examination comes on the end of next week; our masters just do keep us to it!"

"Stingy old misers! You might take French leave, Tom."

"Mother would never let me do that," returned Tom; and he probably made a sign to indicate that his mother was within hearing, as both voices dropped to a lower key; but Mrs. Grape still heard distinctly. "Are you going to take French leave yourself, Bill?" added young Grape. "How else shall you manage to get off?"

"Oh, Monday will be holiday with us; it's a Saint's Day. Look here, Tom; you may as well come. Fishing, up at Powick, is rare fun; and I've got some prime bait."

"I can't," pleaded Tom: "no good thinking about it. You must get one of your own fellows instead."

"Suppose I must. Well, good night."

"Good night, Bill."

"I touch you last," added the strange voice. There was a shriek of laughter, the door banged back, Tom's hand came in to snatch up his cap, which lay on a table near, and he went flying after the other.

They had entered upon the fascinating game of "Titch-touch-last." Mrs. Grape got up, laid her finished cap upon the table, shook the odds and ends of threads from her black gown, and began to put her needles and cotton in the little work-box. While she was doing this, Dolly came in from the kitchen. She looked round the room.

"Why, where's Tom, mother?"

"Some boy called to speak to him, and they are running about the road at Titch-touch-last. The cap looks nice, does it not, Dolly?"

"Oh very," assented Dolly. It was one she had netted.

The voices of the boys were still heard, but at a distance. Dolly went to the door, and looked out.

"Yes, there the two are," she cried. "What boy is it, mother?"

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Grape. "I did not see him, or recognise his voice. Tom called him 'Bill.'"

She went also to the door as she spoke, and stood by her daughter on the low broad step. The voices were fainter now, for the lads, in

their play, were drawing further off and nearer to the town. Mrs. Grape could see them dodging around each other, now on this side the road, now on that. It was a remarkably light night, the moon, in the unclouded sky, almost dazzlingly bright.

"They'll make themselves very hot," she remarked, as she and Dolly withdrew indoors. "What silly things boys are!"

Carrying her cap upstairs, Mrs. Grape then attended to two or three household matters. Half an hour had elapsed when she returned to the parlour. Tom had not come in. "How very thoughtless of him!" she cried: "he must know it is his bed time."

But neither she nor Dolly felt any uneasiness until the clock struck ten. A shade of it crept over Mrs. Grape then. What could have become of the boy?

Standing once more upon the door-step, they gazed up and down the road. A few stragglers were passing up from the town: more people would be abroad on a Saturday night than on any other.

"How dost thee this evening, friend Grape?" called out Rachel Deavor, now sitting with her niece at their open parlour window in the moonlight. Mrs. Grape turned to them, and told of Tom's delinquency. Elizabeth Deavor, a merry girl, came out laughing, and linked her arm within Dolly's.

"He has run away from thee to take a moonlight ramble," she said jestingly. "Thee had been treating him to a scolding, may be."

"No, I had not," replied Dolly. "I have such a pretty grey kitten, Elizabeth."

They stood on, talking in the warm summer night, Mrs. Grape with the elder quakeress, Dolly with the younger, and the time went on. The retiring hour of the two ladies had long passed, but they did not like to leave Mrs. Grape to her uncertainty: she was growing more anxious with every minute. At length the clocks struck half past eleven, and Mrs. Grape, to the general surprise, burst into tears.

"Nay, nay now, do not give way," said Rachel Deavor kindly. "Doubtless he has but gone to the other lad's home, and is letting the time pass unthinkingly. Boys will be boys."

"That unaccountable disappearance of my husband makes me more nervous than I should otherwise be," spoke Mrs. Grape in apology. "It is just a year ago. Am I going to have a second edition of that, in the person of my son?"

"Hush thee now, thee art fanciful; thee should not anticipate evil. It is a pity but thee had recognised the boy who came for thy son: some of us might go to the lad's house."

"I wish I had," sighed Mrs. Grape. "I meant to ask Tom who it was when he came in. Tom called him 'Bill'; that is all I know."

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Dolly, who was standing outside the gate with Elizabeth Deavor. "He is rushing round the corner at full speed, mother."

"Won't I punish him!" cried Mrs. Grape in her relieved feelings : and she too went to the gate.

Dolly's eagerness had misled her. It was not Tom. But it was one of Tom's schoolfellows, young Thorn, whom they all knew. He halted to explain that he had been to a boys' party in the Bath Road, and expected to "catch it" at home for staying so late. Dolly interrupted him to speak of Tom.

"What an odd thing!" cried the lad. "Oh, he'll come home presently, safe enough. Which of our fellows are named Bill, you ask, Miss Grape? Let's see? There's Bill Stroud; and Bill Hardwick—that is, William ——"

"It was neither Stroud nor Hardwick; I should have known the voices of both," interrupted Mrs. Grape. "This lad cannot, I think, be in your school at all, Thorn: he said his school was to have holiday on Monday because it would be a Saint's Day."

"Holiday because it was a Saint's Day!" echoed Thorn. "Oh then, he must have been one of the college boys. No other school goes in for holidays on the Saints' Days but that. The boys have to go to college, morning and afternoon, so it's not a complete holiday: they can get it easily, though, by asking leave."

"I don't think Tom knows any of the college boys," debated Dolly.

"Yes, he does; our school knows some of them," replied Thorn. "Good night: I can't stay. He is sure to turn up presently."

But Tom Grape did not turn up. At midnight his mother put on her bonnet and shawl and started out to look for him in the now deserted streets of the town. Now and again she would enquire of some late wayfarer whether he had met a boy that night, or perhaps two boys, and described Tom's appearance; but she could learn nothing. The most feasible idea she could call up, and the most hopeful was, that Tom had really gone home with the other lad and that something must have happened to keep him there; perhaps an accident. Dolly felt sure it must be so. Elizabeth Deavor, running in at breakfast time to ask for news, laughingly said Tom deserved to be shaken.

But when the morning hours passed and did not bring the truant or any tidings of him, this hope died away. The first thing to be done was to find out who the other boy was, and to question him. Perhaps he had also disappeared!

Getting from young Thorn the address of those of the college boys—three—who, as he chanced to know, bore the name of William, Mrs. Grape went to make enquiries at their houses. She could learn nothing. Each of the three boys disclaimed all knowledge of the affair; their friends corroborating their assertion that they had not been out on the Saturday night. Four more of the King's scholars were named William, they told her; two of them boarding in the house of the head master.

To this gentleman's residence in the College Green, Mrs. Grape next proceeded. It was then evening. The head master listened

courteously to her tale, and became, in his awakened interest, as anxious as she was to find the right boy. Mrs. Grape said she should not know him, but should know his voice. Not one of the three boys, already seen, possessed the voice she had heard.

The two boarders were called into the room, as a mere matter of form; for the master was able to state positively that they were in bed at the hour in question. Neither of them had the voice of the boy who had called for Tom. It was a very clear voice, Mrs. Grape said; she should know it instantly.

"Let me see," said the master, going over mentally the list of the forty King's scholars: "how many more of you boys are named William, beyond those this lady has seen?"

The boys considered, and said there were two others; William Smith and William Singleton; both called familiarly "Bill" in the school. Each of these boys had clear, pleasant voices, the master observed; but neither of them had applied for leave for Monday, nor had he heard of any projected fishing expedition to Powick.

To the house of the Singletons next went Mrs. Grape: but the boy's voice there did not answer to the one she had heard. The Smith family she could not see; they had gone out for the evening: and she dragged herself home, utterly beaten down both in body and spirit.

Another night of anxiety was passed, and then Mrs. Grape returned to Mr. Smith's and saw "Bill." But Bill was hoarse as a raven; it was not at all the clear voice she had heard; though he looked desperately frightened at being questioned.

So there it was. Tom Grape was lost. Lost! and no clue remained as to the why and wherefore. He must have gone after his father, said the sympathising townspeople, all agape with wonder; and a superstitious feeling crept over Mrs. Grape.

But, ere the week was quite over, news came to the desolate home, not of Tom himself; not of the manner of his disappearance; only of the night it happened. On the Friday evening Mrs. Grape and Dolly were sitting together, when a big boy of sixteen appeared at their door, Master Fred. Smith, lugging in his brother Bill.

"He is come to confess, ma'am," said the elder. "He blurted it all out to me just now, too miserable to keep it in any longer, and I've brought him off to you."

"Oh tell me, tell me where he is!" implored Mrs. Grape from her fevered lips; as she rose and clasped the boy, Bill, by his arm.

"I don't know where he is," answered the boy in trembling earnestness. "I can't think where; I wish I could. I know no more than the dead."

"For what have you come here then?"

"To confess that it was I who was with him. You didn't know my voice on the Monday because I had got such a cold," continued he, laying hold of a chair-back to steady his shaking hands. "I must have caught it playing with Tom that night; we got so hot, both of

us. When I heard he had never been home since, couldn't be found anywhere, I felt frightened to death and didn't like to say it was me who had been with him."

"Where did you leave him? Where did you miss him?" questioned the mother, her heart sinking with despair.

"We kept on playing at titch-touch-last; neither of us would give in, each wanted to have the last touch, and we got down past the Bath Road, and on up Sidbury near to the bridge. Tom gave me a touch; it was the last; and rushed through the commandery gates. I was getting tired then, and a thought came to me that instead of going after him I'd play him a trick and make off home, and I did so, tearing over the bridge as hard as I could tear. And that's all the truth," concluded the boy, bursting into tears, "and I never saw Tom again, and have got no more to tell though the head master hoists me for it to-morrow."

"It is just what he said to me, Mrs. Grape," put in the brother quietly, "and I am sure it is the truth."

"Through the commandery gates," repeated Mrs. Grape, pressing her aching brow. "And you did not see him come out again?"

"No, ma'am, I made off as hard as I could go. While he was rushing down there—I heard his boots clattering on the flags—I rushed over the bridge homewards."

The boy had told all he knew. Now that the confession was made he would be too glad to add more had he been able. It left the mystery just as it was before; no better and no worse. There was no outlet to the commandery, save these gates, and nothing within it that could have swallowed up Tom. He must have come out again by these self-same gates. Whither had he then gone?

It was proved that he did come out. When Mr. Bill Smith's confession was made public, an assistant to a doctor in the town remembered to have seen Tom Grape, whom he knew by sight, as he was passing the commandery about that same time to visit a patient in Wyld's Lane. Tom came flying out at the gates, laughing and looking up and down the street. "Where are you, Bill?" he called out. The young doctor, whose name was Seton, looked back at Tom as he went on his way.

But the young man added something more, which nobody else had thought to speak of, and which afforded a small loop-hole of conjecture as to what poor Tom's fate might have been. Just about that hour a small barge on the canal, after passing under Sidbury bridge, came in contact with another barge. Very little damage was done, but there was a great deal of shouting and confusion. As Mr. Seton walked over the bridge, not a second before he saw Tom, he heard the noise and saw people making for the spot. Had Tom Grape made for it? He could easily have reached it. And, if so, had he, amidst the general pushing and confusion on the bank, fallen into the canal? It was hardly to be thought any accident of this kind could happen to

him *unseen* ; though it might be just possible, for the scene for some minutes was one of tumult ; but nothing transpired to confirm it. The missing lad did not reappear, either dead or alive.

And so poor Tom Grape had passed out of life mysteriously as his father had done. Many months elapsed before his mother gave up her search for him ; she was always thinking he would come home again, always hoping it. His loss affected her more than her husband's had, for he vanished under her very eye, so to say ; all the terror of it was palpably enacted before her, all the suspense had to be borne and lived through ; whereas the other loss took place at a distance and she only grew to realize it by degrees ; which of course softened the blow. And the time went on by years, but nothing was seen of Tom Grape.

That was disappearance the second.

Dolly left her place of business at the end of the three years for which she had been apprenticed, and set up for herself ; a brass plate on her mother's door—"Miss Grape, Mantua-maker"—proclaiming the fact to the world. She was but twenty then, with as sweet a face, the Squire says, as Worcester, renowned though it is for its pretty faces, ever saw. She had never in her heart taken kindly to her business, so would not be likely to set the world afire with her skill ; but she had tried to do her best and would continue to do it. A job began to come in now and then : a gown to be turned or a spenser to be made, though not so many of them as Dolly hoped for : but, as her mother said, Rome was not built in a day.

"Mother, I think I shall go to college this morning."

So spoke Dolly at breakfast one Sunday in July. The sun was shining in at the open window, the birds were singing.

"It's my belief, Dolly, you would go off to college every Sunday of your life, give you your way," said Mrs. Grape.

Dolly laughed. "And so I would, mother."

For the beautiful cathedral service had charms for Dolly. Islip church was a very primitive church, the good old clergyman was toothless, the singing of the two psalms was led off by the clerk in a cracked bass voice ; no organ. Accustomed to nothing better than this, the first time Dolly found herself at the cathedral, after their removal to Worcester, and the magnificent services burst upon her astonished senses, she thought she must be in some celestial sphere. The grand, spacious edifice, the musical chanting of the prayers by the minor canons, the singing of the numerous choir, men and boys, in their white surplices, the deep tones of the swelling organ, the array of white-robed prebendaries, the dignified and venerable bishop—Cornwall—in his wig and lawn sleeves, the state, the ceremony of the whole, and the glittering colours of the famed east window in the distance ; all this laid hold of Dolly's senses for ever. She and her mother attended St. Martin's church generally, but Dolly would now and again

lure her mother to the Cathedral. Latterly Mrs. Grape had been ailing and did not go anywhere.

"If you could but go to college to-day, mother!" went on Dolly.

"Why?"

"Mr. Benson preaches. I met Miss Stafford yesterday afternoon and she told me Mr. Benson had come into residence. The *Herald* said so too."

"Then you must go betimes if you would secure a seat," remarked Mrs. Grape. "And mind you don't get your new muslin skirt torn."

So Dolly put on her new muslin, and her bonnet, and started.

When the Reverend Christopher Benson, Master of the Temple, became one of the prebendaries of Worcester his fame as a preacher flew to all parts of the town. You should hear the Squire's account of the crush in getting into the cathedral on the Sundays that he was in residence: four Sundays in the year; or five, as the case might be; all told. Members of other churches, dissenters of different sects, Quakers, Roman Catholics, and non-worshippers anywhere at other times, scrupled not to run to hear Mr. Benson. For, reading like unto his, or preaching like unto his, had rarely been heard in that cathedral or in any other. Though it might be only the Gospel that fell to his share in the communion service, the crowd listened, enraptured, to his sweet tones. The college doors were besieged before the hour for opening them; it was like going into a theatre.

Dolly, on this day, made one in the crowd at the cloister entrance; she was pushed here and pulled there; and although she ran well with the rest as soon as the doors were unlocked, every seat was taken when she reached the chancel. She found a standing place opposite the pulpit, near King John's tomb, and felt very hot in the crush.

"Is it always like this, here?"

The whispered words came from a voice at her side. Dolly turned, and saw a tall, fine-looking, well-dressed man about thirty, with a green silk umbrella in his hand.

"No," she whispered back again. "Only for three or four Sundays, at this time of year, when Mr. Benson preaches."

"Indeed," said the stranger. "His preaching ought to be something extraordinary to attract such a crowd as this."

"And so it is," breathed Dolly. "And his reading—oh, you never heard any reading like it."

"Very eloquent, I suppose?"

"I don't know whether it may be called eloquence," debated Dolly, remembering that a chance preacher she once heard, who thumped the cushions with his hands and shook the air with his voice was said to be eloquent. "Mr. Benson is the quietest preacher and reader I ever listened to."

The stranger seemed to be a kind man. During the stir made by the clergy, preceded by the six black-robed bowing bedesmen, going up

to the communion table, he found a morsel of room on a bench corner, and secured it for Dolly. She thanked him gratefully.

The sermon came to an end, the bishop gave the blessing from his throne, and the crowd poured out. Dolly, by way of a change, made her exit from the great North entrance. The brightness of the day had changed ; a sharp shower was falling.

"Oh my goodness ! I shall get my new muslin wet through !" thought Dolly. "This parasol's of no use."

"Will you allow me to offer you my umbrella—or permit me to hold it over you ?" spoke the stranger, who must have followed her out. And Dolly hesitated and flushed, and did not know whether she ought to say yes or no.

He held the umbrella over Dolly, letting his own coat get wet. The shower ceased presently ; but he walked on by her side to her mother's door, and then departed with a bow fit for an emperor.

"What a polite man he is !" thought Dolly. "Quite the gentleman." And she mentioned the occurrence to her mother ; who seemed to-day more poorly than usual.

They sat at the open window in the afternoon, and Dolly read aloud the evening psalms. It was the fifth day of the month. As Dolly finished the last verse and closed the book, Mrs. Grape, after a moment's silence, repeated the words :—

"The Lord shall give strength unto his people : the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace."

"What a beautiful promise that is, Dolly !" she said in a hushed tone. "Peace ! Ah, my dear, nobody can know what that word means until they have been sorely tried. Peace everlasting !"

Mrs. Grape leaned back in her chair, gazing upwards. The sky was of a deep blue ; a brilliant cloud of gold-colour, of a peculiar shape, was moving slowly across it just over head.

"One could almost fancy it's God's golden throne in the brighter land," she murmured. "My child, do you know the thought comes across me at times that it may not be long before I am there. And I am getting to long for it."

"Don't say that, mother," cried the startled girl.

"Well well, dear, I don't want to frighten you. It is all as God pleases."

"I shall send to ask Mr. Nash to come to see you to-morrow, mother. Do you feel worse ?"

Mrs. Grape slightly shook her head. Presently she spoke.

"Is it not almost tea-time, Dolly ? If—whoever is that ?"

A gentleman, passing, with a red rose in his button-hole and silk umbrella in his hand, was taking off his hat to Dolly. Dolly's face turned red as the rose as she returned the bow, and whispered to her mother that it was the polite stranger. He halted to express a hope that the young lady had not taken cold from the morning shower.

He turned out to be a Mr. Mapping, a traveller in the wine trade

for some London house. But, when he was stating this to Mrs. Grape during the first visit paid her, he added in a careless, off-hand manner, that he was thankful to say he had good private means and was not dependent upon his occupation. He lingered on in Worcester, and became intimate with the Grapes.

Events thickened. Before the next month, August, came in, Mrs. Grape died. Dolly was stunned; but she would have felt the blow even more keenly than she did, had she not fallen over head and ears in love with Alick Mapping. About three hundred pounds, all her mother's savings, came to Dolly; save for that, and the furniture, she was unprovided for.

"You cannot live upon that: what's a poor three hundred pounds?" spoke Mr. Mapping a day or two after the funeral, his tone full of tender compassion.

"How rich he must be himself!" thought poor Dolly.

"You will have to let me take care of you, child."

"Oh dear!" murmured Dolly.

"We had better be married without delay. Once you are my wife ——"

"Please don't go on!" interposed Dolly in a burst of sobs. "My dear mother is hardly buried."

"But what are you to do?" he gently asked. "You will not like to live here alone—and you have no income to live here upon. Your business is worth nothing as yet; it would not keep you in gloves. If I speak of these things prematurely, Dolly, it is for your sake."

Dolly sobbed. The future looked rather desolate.

"You have promised to be my wife, Dolly; remember that."

"Oh, please don't talk of it yet awhile!" sobbed Dolly.

"Leave you here alone I will not; you are not old enough to take care of yourself; you must have a protector. I will take you with me to London, where you will have a good home and be happy in it as a cricket: but you must know, Dolly, that I cannot do that until we are married. All sensible people must say that you will be quite justified under the circumstances."

Mr. Alick Mapping had a wily tongue, and Dolly was persuaded to listen. The marriage was fixed for the first week in September, and the banns were put up at St. Martin's Church; which, as everybody knows, stands in the corn market. Until then Mr. Mapping returned to London; to make, as he told Dolly, preparations for his bride. An acquaintance of Mrs. Grape's, who had been staying with Dolly since the death, would remain to the last. As soon as Dolly was gone, the furniture would be sold by Mr. Stretch, the auctioneer, and the proceeds transmitted to Dolly in London. Mrs. Grape had given all she possessed to Dolly, in the fixed and firm belief that her son was really no more.

But all this was not to go on without a warning from their neighbour,

the Quaker lady. She sent for Dolly in, being confined to her own chamber by illness.

"Thee should not be in this haste, Dorothy," she began. "It is not altogether seemly, child, and it may not be well for thee hereafter. Thee are too young to marry; thee should wait a year or two ——"

"But I am not able to wait," pleaded poor Dolly, with tears in her eyes. "How could I continue to live alone in the house—all by myself?"

"Nay, but thee would not have done that. Some one of discreet age would have been glad to come and share expenses with thee. I might have helped thee to a suitable person myself: a cousin of mine, an agreeable and kindly woman, would like to live up this way. But the chief objection that I see to this hasty union, Dorothy," continued Miss Deavor, "is that thee knows next to nothing about the young man."

Dolly opened her eyes in surprise. "Why, I know him quite well, dear Miss Rachel. He has told me all about himself."

"That I grant thee. Elizabeth informs me that thee has had a good account from himself, as to his means and respectability. But thee has not verified it."

"Verified it!" repeated Dolly.

"Thee has not taken steps to ascertain that it is true. How does thee know it to be so?"

Dolly's face flushed. "As if he would deceive me! You do not know him, Miss Deavor."

"Nay, child, I wish not to cast undeserved aspersion on him. But thee should ask for proof that what he tells thee is correct. Before thee ties thyself to him for life, Dorothy, thee will do well to get some friend to make enquiries in London. It is my best advice to thee, child; and it is what thy mother would have done before giving thee to him."

Dolly thanked Miss Deavor and went away with a sob. The advice was well meant, of course, but quite needless. Suspect Alick Mapping of deceit! Dolly would rather have suspected herself. And she did nothing.

The morning of the wedding arrived in due course. Dolly was attiring herself for it in a pretty new grey gown, her straw bonnet trimmed with white satin lying on the bed (to resume her black on the morrow), when Elizabeth Deavor came in.

"I have something to say to thee, Dolly," she began, in a grave tone. "I hardly knew whether to speak to thee or not, feeling not altogether sure of the thing myself, so I asked Aunt Rachel, and she thinks thee ought to be told."

"What is it?" cried Dolly.

"I think I saw thy brother Tom last night."

The words gave Dolly a curious shock. She fell back in a chair.

"I will relate it to thee," said Elizabeth. "Last evening I was at

Aunt Rachel's window above stairs, when I saw a boy in dark clothes standing on the pavement outside, just opposite thy gate. It was a bright night, as thee knows. He had his arms folded and stood quite still, gazing at this house. The moonlight shone on his face and I thought how much it was like poor lost Tom. I went down stairs and stepped to our gate, to ask whether he was in want of any one : and then, Dolly, I felt queerer than I ever felt in my life, for I saw that it was Tom. At least, I thought so."

"Did he speak?" gasped Dolly.

"He neither spoke nor answered me : he turned off quickly down the road. I think it was Tom ; I do indeed."

"What am I to do?" cried Dolly. "Oh, if I could but find him !"

"There's nothing to do, that we can see," answered the young Quakeress. "I have talked it over with Aunt Rachel. It would appear as though he did not care to show himself : else, if it were truly thy brother, why did he not come in? I will look out for him every night and speak to him if he appears again. I promise thee that, Dolly."

"Why do you say 'appears,' Elizabeth?" cried the girl, catching at the word. "You think it was himself, do you not ; not his—his spirit?"

"Truly, I can but conclude it was himself."

Dolly, in a fine state of bewilderment, what with one thing or another, was married to Mr. Mapping in St. Martin's Church, by its white-haired rector, Digby Smith. A yellow post-chaise waited at the church gates and carried them to Tewkesbury. The following day they went on by coach to Gloucester, where Mr. Mapping intended to stay a few days before proceeding to London.

They took up their quarters at a comfortable country inn on the outskirts of the town. On the second day after their arrival, Dolly, about to take a country walk with her husband, ran down stairs from putting her bonnet on, and could not see him. The barmaid told her he had gone into the town to post a letter, and asked Dolly to step into the bar-parlour to wait.

It was a room chiefly used by commercial travellers. Dolly's attention was caught by something over the mantel-piece. In a small glass-case, locked, there was the portrait of a man cleverly done in pencil ; by its side hung a plain seal and key attached to a short black ribbon : and over all was a visiting-card, inscribed in ink "Mr. Gardner." Dolly looked at this and turned sick and faint : it was her father's likeness ; her father's watch, seal, and ribbon. Of an excitable nature she burst into sobbing tears, and the barmaid ran in. There and then, the mystery so long hanging about Robert Grape's fate was cleared up, so far as it ever would be in this world.

He had left Bridgenorth on the Thursday morning. Towards the evening of the following day, Friday, he appeared at this very inn.

This same barmaid, an obliging and modest-mannered young woman, presenting a rare contrast to the bar girls of the present day, saw him come in. His face had a peculiar, gray shade upon it, which attracted her notice, and she asked him if he felt ill. He answered that he felt pretty well then, but supposed he must have had a fainting fit when walking into the town, for to his surprise he found himself on the grass by the road side, waking up from a sort of stupor. He engaged a bed-room for the night, and she thought he said—but she had never been quite sure—that he had come to look out for a horse at the horse fair to be held in Gloucester the next day. He took no supper, not “feeling up to it,” he said, but drank a glass of weak brandy-and-water, and ate a biscuit with it, before going up to bed. The next morning he was found dead; had apparently died quietly in his sleep. An inquest was held, and the medical men testified that he had died of heart disease. Poor Dolly, listening to this, wondered whether the pitch out of the gig at Bridgenorth had fatally injured him.

“We supposed him to be a Mr. Gardner,” continued the barmaid, “as that card”—pointing to it—“was found in his pocket-book. But we had no clue as to who he was or whence he came. His stockings were marked with a ‘G’ in red cotton; and there was a little money in his pocket-book, just enough to pay the expenses of the funeral.”

“But that likeness,” said Dolly. “How did you come by it? Who took it?”

“Ah, ma’am, it was a curious thing, that—but such things do not happen by chance. An idle young man of the town used to frequent our inn; he was clever at drawing and would take off a likeness of anybody near him with a few strokes of a pen or pencil in a minute or two, quite surreptitious like and for his own amusement. Wonder ful likenesses they were. He was in the bar-parlour, this very room, ma’am, while the stranger was drinking his brandy-and-water, and he dashed off this likeness.”

“It is *exactly* like,” said poor Dolly.

“When nobody came forward to identify the stranger, the landlord got the sketch given up to him. He put it in this case with the watch and seal and card, and hung it where you see, hoping that sometime or other it might be recognised. That’s how it was, ma’am.”

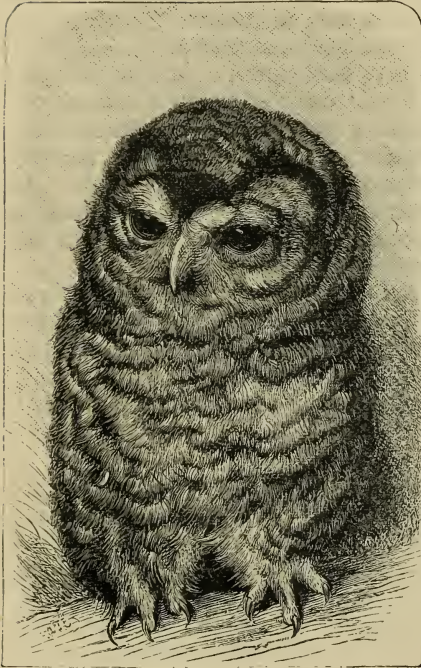
So that the one disappearance, that of Robert Grape, was now set at rest.

And I am sorry that the telling of all these matters has lengthened itself out beyond anticipation. Dolly’s own history will have to be concluded next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

IN THE NEW FOREST.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



A FOREST OWL.

THOSE who know nothing of the New Forest have yet to become acquainted with one of the loveliest and most charming spots in England. So near the Metropolis, the wonder is that it is not as much sought after as the popular and often more remote sea-side places to which people crowd in multitudes. And probably this would be the case if inns were as plentiful in the Forest as the bracken and the bright scarlet fungi that adorn it; beneath which the fairies encamp and hold their moonlit revels, dancing and capering on midsummer nights to the music of the leaves gently stirred by the night breezes: melodies too refined and ethereal for our coarser natures to enter into and comprehend.

We can only listen to the murmur that is going on: we hear the sighing and the soughing: the surgings that sweep and vibrate through the long ferny glades and overarching avenues, finding most voice where the forest grows most dense. But we stand without the charmed circle, and listen as we listen to the murmur of the streams that are everywhere at hand; enchanted, awestruck, perhaps wondering what all these Voices of Nature are saying one to another, but not understanding. The fairy folk alone are in perfect sympathy with the music of their own special realm. We are not admitted into their secrets.

But the inns and hostelries in and about the New Forest are few and far between. When people go down in multitudes, they will have to camp out; take their own tents and beds with them: just as in the old days, when people went out to tea, they carried their own cup and saucer. Or some might prefer the more substantial comforts

of a caravan: one day settling down upon the borders of the Forest, overlooking acres and acres of heathery moorland, that in its season blooms out in rich colours, delighting the eye and the senses, charging the breezes with rich fragrance; the next pitching their tent in the very heart of a dense wood, where the branches meet overhead and shut out the hot sun, and where the eye may trace forests of aisles and arches, and trees intersecting each other like the pillars of a cathedral.

What an experience it would be! A caravan and a chosen few, and for the hottest, brightest month of the year, to pass a roving, gipsy, Bohemian existence, throwing aside all the trammels and constraints of society, and living a pure, free life, glorying in the beauties of Nature, as pristine and primitive as she was a thousand years ago; revelling in the scent of the firs, the sweet incense of the burning, crackling cones that boiled our kettle; rejoicing in the crisp sound of the bracken, as, wandering beside the streams, we trod it under foot—and cannot help treading it under foot, it grows in such wealth and profusion. Each day given to a section of the forest; and some sections should be so beautiful that to each two or three days might be devoted.

And at night, sitting round a crackling, scent-laden fire lighting up happy faces, one of our “chosen few” should play the zither, and draw out its heart-touching notes; another should have a sweet, far-reaching voice; a third should be a learned fiddler, and give us strains more fantastic and weird than those with which Paganini was wont to astonish his hearers: whilst a fourth, with a gift of memory, should thrill us with stories full of ghostly, legendary lore, repeating by the way all that Shakespeare had to say about the present scene.

It would be a glorious month, an ideal holiday: and those who passed by might envy us as much as I envied an old man I encountered one day, who had settled himself outside the trees overlooking one of the splendid moors. *His* caravan looked the essence of cleanliness and comfort, he the picture of a patriarch. Long, grey, flowing locks, a ruddy countenance, a bright eye, clear-cut features; a quiet, patient expression, such as we not infrequently see on the aged, when life’s evening is closing, and the sun draws near the horizon, and they have a more glorious dawn to look forward to than this world can ever show them.

The old man’s pot was swung on a tripod, and the fire beneath was blazing and crackling, but the blue smoke curling about the *marmite* was not allowed to enter. I felt inclined to lift the lid, and acquaint myself with the savoury mess it contained—very savoury of its kind, be sure. I daresay the old man would have been glad enough of company at his midday meal; but my little horse was restive, and declared, as plainly as if he had spoken, that if I dismounted and tied him to the wheel, beside the caravan horse, I should never mount him again. For this little horse was not a common every-day horse;

he was swift of foot and sure of temper (especially when he had his own way), could fly like the wind, or trot gently with a two-year-old child upon his back. He was of some pedigree, too; had run several races, and, what is more to the purpose, had won them all. And he had been christened by wide-spread, universal consent, the *Pride of the Forest*.

The old man was gathering sticks, when I first saw him, to replenish his fire and keep the pot boiling—in a world unknown to him often a more difficult task than he found it to-day. He touched his cap as I stopped, bade me good morrow in a cheerful voice that yet had in it a ring of resignation corresponding with the look upon his



LYNDHURST.

face; remarked on the fineness of the day and admired the beauty of my little animal. We had some talk together; and the spirit almost moved me to ask him about his past life, and why he was alone now, quite alone, in his old age. Whether death had robbed him of his life companion, or whether he had been a solitary man all his days? That, I felt, was impossible; he did not look like it. He had had a history and an active life. His better-half no doubt had reached the summit of the mountain before him, and entered the bark steered by the pale boatman. His turn would come before long. But I thought I would first take home my restless little *Pride*, and return in the afternoon for a long, quiet chat, lead him gently into the past, and by attention and sympathy learn his history.

Alas! that afternoon saw no return, and the next morning the spot was deserted; the caravan and the old man were gone; nothing left

to mark what had been but a black round patch upon the moor, and a few charred embers. Across there the trees were waving and glinting in the bright sun, in all the rich tints of autumn; a wealth of gorgeous colouring indescribably lovely, before which words are as nothing, and the very brush of the artist trembles with something of despair. But the little picture in the foreground, which yesterday had given it so much life and animation, had been so quietly picturesque, and so vividly touched a responsive chord in one's nature, had dissolved and disappeared, and left nothing behind it but a recollection, an unsatisfied longing, an untold story.

Leaving Waterloo by a midday train, after a journey of about



RUFUS'S STONE.

eighty-five miles you reach Lyndhurst Station, whilst the afternoon is yet young. On the road you pass Winchester, about which we may have something to say by-and-by; and presently, winding round Southampton Water, that to-day develops long reaches of unsightly, uninteresting, depressing mud, the train stops at Southampton West. One or two more stations, and we are at *Lyndhurst Road*.

Here very few passengers alighted, and only two entered the shabby, ramshackle omnibus that represents the inn at Lyndhurst and has to traverse the two miles of road separating the village from the station. Shabby as it is, there is no doubt as to its strength, for the men pitch heavy boxes on to the roof as if they were having a game at shuttlecock, and they come crashing down with a sound that sends one flying out again before worse happens. Worse, however, does not happen, and we return to our seats expecting to see the roof cracked and split into sections like a geographical puzzle. It is quite entire.

The driver smiled, a mixture of benignity and pity. "You're a bit nervous, mayhap, sir," he said, "but there's no need. The gentlemen from London ain't accustomed to this kind of thing. I've often remarked they don't know a strong 'bus when they see one."

It was in vain to assure him that we knew an old one at least, and that the strength of youth never accompanied the infirmities of age. The argument did not tell.

"Bless you, sir!" he returned, "this omnibus is good for another twenty years or more. It's only for the look of the thing that our people have had a new one built, and it will be out this very day for the first time. I daresay we shall see it when we get to Lyndhurst. But I'd rather drive the old one, after all."

We admired his constancy, and in another minute were jogging over a well-made road. The springs, at any rate, had long since given way; so that in the matter of endurance it would seem that wood has the advantage over iron.

The only other occupant of the vehicle was a female who looked like a respectable housekeeper. Probably she was going to one of the great houses in the neighbourhood to take command of the domestic establishment and rule over the servants' hall. It was not difficult to see that with so gentle a creature they would have an easy time of it. Ever and anon she looked out on both sides of the road, thought it would be "main dull in the winter," and wondered how she should like it after a London life.

It was a glorious drive, that two miles between the station and the village. On either side lay the forest, the trees changing to rich autumn tints. Thick bracken grew in all directions, some of it six feet high. At the end of the two miles we reached Lyndhurst, a village consisting of a long, straggling street, picturesque, but with no special feature to attract attention. Winding up the hill between the village houses, the grand new omnibus referred to by the driver at the station suddenly shot from its shed and crossed our path like a comet, bringing out admiring eyes from many a doorway, and creating quite a hubbub of small excitement. Then we came to the inn, and the end of the second stage of my journey.

Opposite stood the church, comparatively new, remarkable for its elevated position—moderately speaking: as if the planners and builders had determined to make the way to church impossible to some, difficult for all. It is not distinguished for beauty, inside or out, but contains a fresco, by Leighton, of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, almost worth a visit to Lyndhurst in itself. Of this, Mrs. Short, of Lyndhurst, has made a large and excellent photograph reflecting great credit upon her skill. Her views of the New Forest are equally good.

The church happened to be open, and whilst waiting for a conveyance to continue the third part of my journey, I used the favourable conjunction of open doors and spare moments for making a circuit of the interior. A pretty and amiable young woman was rubbing brasses,

and otherwise adorning and cleaning the church. Itself modern, it stands on the site of an edifice not much more ancient than itself, it is said, and far less sightly, that was pulled down to make way for the requirements of an increasing population. The fresco stood out grandly from the very end of the aisle, but only when close to it was all its grace and beauty, softness and refinement, seen to perfection.

Going back to the inn, the conveyance to take me to Stoney Cross soon came round. The new omnibus was still flourishing up and down the village street, "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." My Jehu was enraptured.

"A rare fine one, sir," said he, gazing with pride at what must add so much to the reputation of his house. "Red velvet inside, comfortable seats on the top. Now, wouldn't you, sir, like to step down, and have a good look at her?" This was said in such a tone as one might use towards a schoolboy upon taking him to a pastrycook's and offering him sundry dainties. But by this time I was comfortably packed in the little waggonette, and resisted the offer.

"About time you had a new omnibus," I said. "First impressions go for much, and seeing this antediluvian vehicle at the station, makes one wonder whether everything else at Lyndhurst is after the same pattern."

The old man laughed. "I don't think I'm a great way better," said he. "I've been here more than forty year, and I've grown old with hard work, like the 'bus. But I've got some go in me yet, and so has she. We shall keep her for wet days, like a double set of harness."

"And you—will you come out on fine days, like the new conveyance?"

"Ah! ah!" he cried, with a melancholy chuckle: "I'm only a postboy, not an omnibus. I must take the rough with the smooth, the fair with the foul. I've grown old at that kind of work, but not rusty. When I tumble to pieces, the spring will be well worn out."

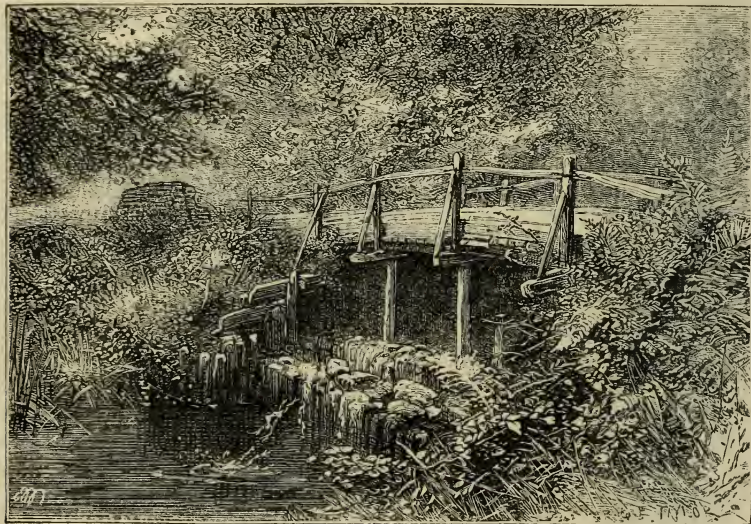
He was still a hale, tough old fellow; and if we should both be living ten years hence, and I should visit Stoney Cross, likely enough he may be there to drive me.

We turned from the inn and very soon had left Lyndhurst behind us. Some time before visiting the New Forest, an old friend had said to me:

"You must get out at Lyndhurst Road, take the omnibus to Lyndhurst village, there hire a conveyance to take you to Stoney Cross, and make the Compton Arms, in the very heart of the Forest, your head-quarters. You will find yourself as happy as the day is long, and as comfortable as Mr. and Mrs. Coggin can make you."

There is hardly a nook or cranny in England that my friend does not know, scarcely a palatial mansion that he has not visited. He has oftentimes been the guest of royalty as well as of less exalted individuals, and was therefore supposed to know something about the matter.

For this reason I was bound for the Compton Arms, Stoney Cross. I hardly knew to what I was going, but pictured a small village, with the usual accompaniment of straggling geese and children—the latter much more noisy and disagreeable than the former. I expected to have to retire late to rest and rise up early to avoid the annoyance of broken sleep by the thousand-and-one village sounds that are fifty times more disturbing than the continuous roar of a great city, or the everlasting beat and plash of the surge upon the sea-shore. The latter, indeed, is soothing rather than otherwise. But the “cock’s shrill



RUSTIC BRIDGE IN THE NEW FOREST.

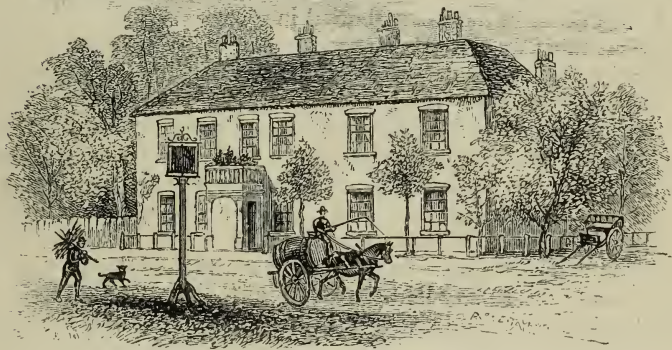
clarion,” the waking-up of animal life, the commencement of village domestic occupations—these are only to be borne with calmness by those who can sleep through a battle and be undisturbed by an earthquake.

Meanwhile I was on the road to my unknown quarters. It was sufficient happiness for the time being, guarantee sufficient for that which was to come. Nothing could be more glorious and beautiful than the drive, especially as, after passing, on the left, the Kennels of the New Forest Foxhounds, we made progress, and entered more into the solitude of the forest. We could not, of course, leave the high road and penetrate into the heart of the woods; but as we went we obtained long, lovely views of glades, forest aisles and arches, beautiful bracken fronds, all full of golden, ruddy autumn tints. Here and there squirrels ran quickly across our path, with their long bushy tails and twinkling eyes; looking far prettier and more graceful than they do when shut up in their little cages, performing almost the penance of Sisyphus without having his sins to answer for.

We turned to the left and ascended the hill towards Minstead, but looked in vain far down the glades for the red deer, once so plentiful in the Forest, subsequently so scarce, and now once more flourishing in numbers. It was the wrong time of the day for them; they seldom show themselves except at early morning or late evening.

Minstead has in itself no especial feature, except a small, quaint old church, and a primitive, very clean-looking inn. Its sign, "The Trusty Servant," hung high up, a copy of the figure to be found in the entry of the kitchen at St. Mary's College, Winchester: a curious compound of a man, a hog, a deer, and an ass.

We were now more than half-way on our road. Turning to the left, we ascended the hill, still with the grand trees about us, long stretches of views into the interior of the Forest. Birds were



THE COMITON ARMS.

chattering and squirrels were jumping from bough to bough; fern fronds and bracken obstructed one's path in loveliest but somewhat irritating confusion, causing a longing for a whole forest of deer to eat up a pathway at least, and make one's way through the thickets a little less difficult. Every now and then a stream, heard but unseen, sent forth its musical sound, a constant rippling and murmuring: forest voices that almost seemed to make more palpable the utter silence and solitude that surrounded us.

Reaching the top of the hill, we came upon a clear open space, a ridge commanding one of the most magnificent views in the New Forest. In the far distance might be seen the calm, sparkling Southampton Water, twelve miles off; the Isle of Wight beyond. On the right was spread out a rich carpet of trees, wave upon wave of billowy verdure, gradually sloping into a valley, more lovely than ever to-day, with every varying tone of autumn: a wealth of gorgeous colouring, every imaginable tint of brown, yellow, and

golden. A long, straight, open road now lay before us, and at a little distance stood a solitary house with a sign before it swinging in the wind.

"Is that the Compton Arms?" I asked the talkative old driver, who had entertained me as we came along with the history of everything and everybody connected with the New Forest for the last hundred years.

"Ay, sir; that's the Compton Arms, sure enough. And mighty comfortable you'll be there."

It was so different from what I had pictured it (things always are different from our picturings) that I could hardly take in the information. Instead of a small, rural village, in place of an inn under the very shadow of the great forest trees, behold a solitary road-side house; no other place near it, separated by a certain amount of heathery moorland from all trees; in the very heart of the forest certainly; trees everywhere to be seen, yet none to speak of very near to us. It was much better so. A situation more healthy and bracing than if it had been down in the valley, buried in gloom.

The first thing we saw was a herd of black pigs and geese mingling together in friendly understanding, grazing and taking their walks abroad—for they were soon out of sight. I wondered whether they would come back with their proper number, or whether a straggler would take it into his head to go forth and see the world—to return a sadder and a wiser pig. But the pigs and the geese stray far and wide, and are never lost; and one herd will mix with another, and sometimes have a pitched battle, and separate again without getting confused as to their own identity; each goes his own way, and each knows to what party he belongs.

By the time I was fairly settled at the Compton Arms, the shades of evening were beginning to fall. There was very little more to be done that day except stroll out in front and watch the sunset gild the forest and flush the sky with the clear bright tones one sees only in autumn. Days when a certain healthy sharpness in the air tells you very distinctly that, in spite of possible and occasional warm intervals, summer is gone, and pale winter and cold winds and naked, shivering trees are at hand.

No shivering trees to-night, but warm-tinted, well-clothed branches, glowing red in the sun, that presently sank below the horizon: and night quickly and very effectually shut in the world.

Strolling out on the heath later on, the darkness and solitude and silence were almost appalling. One could only stand perfectly still and enjoy the effect in all its intensity and perfection. A black mass of foliage was spread in front, and not a sound came from the depths of the forest. Its living creatures were safe in their nests and lairs, fast asleep—the sleep of animal life which always seems to have one eye open, and in a moment rouses and falls back again into unconsciousness—a faculty we may well envy but cannot attain to.

Straight from the whirl and unrest of London, this solitude fell upon the spirit with a soothing sense inexpressibly grateful, more healing to exhausted nerves than all the draughts and potions in the whole pharmacopœia. The stars above glittered a thousand-fold and alone seemed to respond to one's sense of companionship; whilst the Great Bear pursuing his course and directing one's gaze instinctively to the North Star, carried one's thoughts seawards. There, possibly, at this very moment, a brave vessel might be straining every timber to ride safely through mountainous waters, and many a brave heart, perhaps, would have given its dearest possessions to be standing safe and sound in the midst of this dark solitude.

"Those that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep."

We were surrounded by wonders here, too, but of a more peaceful, less awful kind: the wonders of earth and sky. Not far off, it is true—twelve miles away—the sea began its reign; a reign of peace or terror according to its moods: but how furiously the billows might lash, how high the waves might roll, how despairing might be the cry of a sinking crew, none of it all could ever penetrate to and destroy this silence.

I had strolled to the very edge of the woods, and in the little distance the lights of the inn gleamed out in a bright, friendly manner, suggesting that this chilly night, the warm, fire-lit, candle-lit room, with closed shutters and drawn curtains, a comfortable easy chair and a favourite book, was perhaps a more sensible manner of passing the time, than wandering about these ancient dominions, risking pitfalls, or coming full tilt against the trees, like honest Sancho Panza warring with the windmills.

I was not long in finding out that all the praises sung in favour of the Compton Arms were even short of its merits, and that our host and hostess made the comfort of a guest their first consideration. It was strange to meet with anything so well ordered and organised in this out-of-the-way, secluded spot. If it were more widely known, it would soon have to expand its walls and raise its roof; and even then rooms would have to be made sure of in advance—as is not infrequently the case now. The cooking of the establishment would satisfy an epicure, and the dairy supplies were in keeping with the artistic resources of the kitchen department. Unlimited cream of the richest kind, butter of exquisite flavour—all made on the premises, and therefore beyond the unpleasant suspicion that so often lurks about London supplies.

I rather dwell upon the merits of the Compton Arms, Stoney Cross, near Lyndhurst (to be precise in the address), because it is a rarity in its way. Rare to discover in a spot where one would expect nothing but the resources of a bare road-side inn, all the civility, attention, and in every reasonable sense of the word, the

comfort of a metropolitan hotel. Not gilded staircases, of course, or marble corridors; not painted ceilings or silken hangings; but large, comfortable bed-rooms and excellent beds, one capital sitting-room upstairs, and one or two smaller ones below—and no man in his travels should ask for more—and few will get as much as they will find at the Compton Arms.

But the charm of the place is in its isolation, and because it is in the very heart of the Forest. You may go out and in five minutes find yourself in the depths of the silent woods, surrounded by lovely glades and avenues and long vistas of trees, the bracken crackling and crisping under your feet, the falling leaves rustling (if it is autumn) as you stir amongst them, with a sound so exhilarating, which you enjoy just as much as the very children themselves—yourself the greatest child.

And, I have said, all this silence, solitude and beauty are so refreshing, so restoring, after the exhausting life and labour of the world: whether it be the labour of work or of pleasure—the midnight oil of study or the midnight blaze of dissipation. To run down from London and take a week of this life, or even a few days, makes a new man of you. The gloomy thoughts and dark forebodings, the restless longing for something different—we hardly knew what in our unrest—all disappear. The mind resumes its tone, nerves and body are re-braced; you wonder what could have been amiss a week ago.

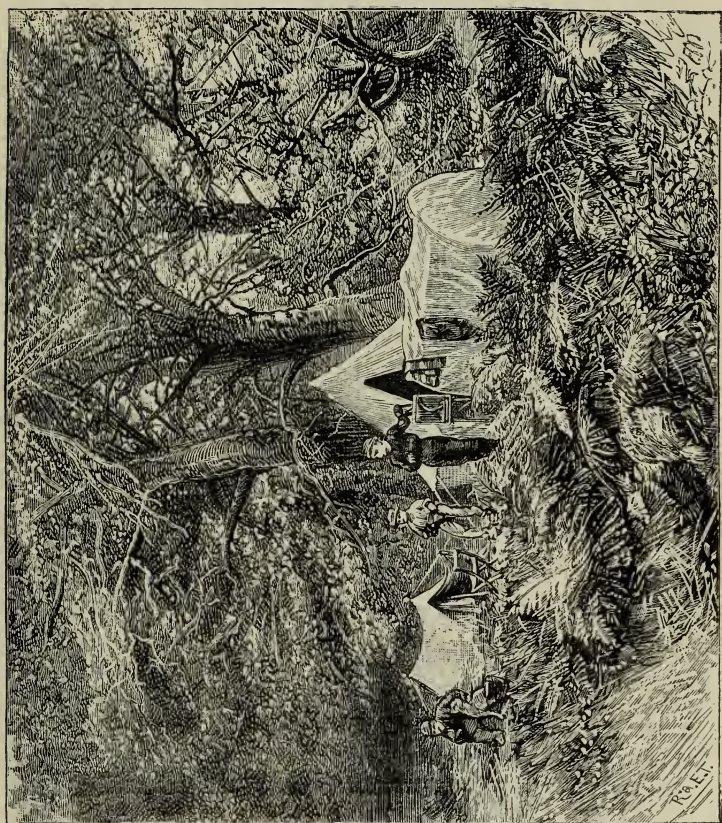
If you are a good pedestrian, you may take long walks *ad libitum*; a fresh walk every day; or if inclined for a gallop across country, you may join the meet and come in at the tail of the hunt if not at the death. And winning this tail will do you just as much suit and service, from a healthful point of view, as if you had won the other. This one, too, you may keep; no one seeks to deprive you of the honour; but the other you would probably feel bound to offer to those bright eyes, those loosened locks and glowing cheeks, “flushed with the hue of health,” in all the attraction of “maiden meditation, fancy free,” that came in only a few seconds behind you—perhaps to be fancy free no longer. Oh! beware! beware!

The next morning, how different and glorious was the view from the windows of the inn. Once more I thought how far better was its situation than if we had been down in a hollow, in a relaxing air, surrounded by overshadowing trees and falling leaves—influences so depressing—and all the village sounds of life and boisterous merriment and daily labour, that in rustic settlements stand out with such startling emphasis.

In place of the dark pall stretching last night over the valley and rising beyond, this morning there was a magnificent sea of leaves, “surging in mighty billows,” glinting in sunshine and in all the tints of autumn that are so indescribably beautiful. From the back of the inn the view was very different in character, more pastoral and cultivated. We looked upon rich, far-off fields and well-kept

hedges, smooth lawns, slopes gently wooded; whilst in the distance beyond, to the right, Southampton water lay cold and sleeping in the sunshine.

My first pilgrimage was to Rufus's Stone, which marks the spot where King William II. was shot by Walter Tyrrell all those centuries ago. As the spot then looked, so it looks now, save that the tree



CAMPING OUT.

against which the arrow glanced has disappeared. Indeed, many parts of the forest are unchanged since the days when it was first founded.

Crossing the heath, passing some gravel pits, where a labourer was hard at work, with whom one stopped to exchange civilities, and descending a somewhat steep road, bounded on one side by the heath, on the other by the forest, we looked over the tops of many of the trees in a way that seemed to give us power and command over nature, a strange, delightful sense of soaring. In about five minutes the stone stood out in a tolerably clear space upon the green-sward, each of the three sides bearing an inscription.

The original stone had been so defaced by people carving their names upon it, that it was encased by this iron structure, which to a certain extent defies the power of the knife, and the efforts of those who are too eager to leave behind them wherever they go such records of their folly. The very trees of the forest are not sacred to these destroyers, and names and initials were deeply carved upon the bark of many a noble oak, many a fine beech, in the very teeth of the notices warning against the practice.

How vividly passed before one that scene that took place nearly a thousand years ago, when a king lost his life at the hands of a subject. If purposely done, what remorse must have been his: if an accident, what sorrow and regret! We can imagine the sad procession: the monarch carried to a neighbouring hut; thence, in the evening, taken on a rough cart, through the gloomy forest and the long dark roads, to Winchester; a mournful, melancholy transport; though in those days probably they thought less of death and changes—"Le roi est mort, vive le roi!"—than we do in this later and more civilized age. Still, a king was a king, whatever might have been his life; and great must have been the cry and stir that vibrated throughout the country, spread by the slow-reaching channels of report.

From the stone the road stretched upwards over the heath, but the slope of the hill hid the inn from view. To the right the wood grew thick and dense, and in its recesses one might easily stray and be lost. Following the road downwards, I soon came to the small village of Brook, with its inevitable inn and swinging sign. Here a magpie hopping mischievously about, came up and boldly inspected me, chattering in a tame and very impudent manner. Finally it went off in triumph with a bright steel chain thrown to it by the landlord of the inn, which it stowed away cunningly behind a wagon in the yard. Passing on over a rustic, picturesque bridge, I turned to the right into the wood and followed the course of the stream for some distance.

Nothing could be more lovely than the scene. The banks of the stream were lined with a wealth of fern and bracken, and the water rippled along with the most musical of sounds. The trees arched and met overhead; the sun threw long shadows into the wood. Bright scarlet fungi grew in profusion, and the tender fronds of the younger bracken were of the most transparent green and gold, as they held up their delicate structures to the light.

In the hot summer months, to come and picnic here with a favourite book would be high bliss. Still better to go further into the depths, out of sound and reach of the high road, and pitch one's tent—which may easily be done—and pass the days sketching or reading, or lounging and doing nothing but enjoying the bare fact of existence, free and happy as primeval man. Burdened perhaps with a load of sin, sorrow and suffering as yet unknown to him; but possessing a thousand-and-one advantages, sources of happiness, civilization and refinement, to which he was equally a stranger.

LADY ENNERDALE'S JEWELS.

"YOU will certainly either lose that case, or have it stolen from you, one of these days," said Lord Ennerdale to his wife, in that peculiarly acidulated tone which her ladyship disliked above all things to hear.

It was the 20th of December. Lord and Lady Ennerdale were going down to Fairmead to spend Christmas with Mr. and Mrs. Nugent Dawson. Quite a distinguished company were to meet there, and Lady Ennerdale had determined to take her diamonds. She felt sure that no such necklace as hers would be seen at Fairmead. It was not merely that the stones of which it was composed were remarkable for their weight and brilliancy, it was the fact of their being so inimitably matched as regarded size and quality that gave the necklace an almost unique reputation among such baubles. It had come down to the present Earl from his great grandfather, who had brought it with him from India (there were strange stories afloat at the time as to the mode in which he had become possessed of it), and it was looked upon as being as much a part of the entailed property as Wychcombe itself.

There was a second family jewel of lesser value than the necklace, but almost as highly prized, in a certain emerald bracelet, which had been an heirloom in the Ennerdale family for generations, and had glittered on the arm of one Countess after another from the days of Queen Anne until now.

That Lady Ennerdale duly prized these family treasures need hardly be said, but being naturally of a somewhat forgetful and unsuspecting disposition, her husband more than once had felt himself compelled to beg of her to look more carefully after their safe keeping. On one occasion her ladyship had left her jewel-case behind her, when returning from a country visit, and had not discovered her loss till the train had taken her twenty miles on her homeward journey. In this instance the telegraph was at once put into requisition, and no harm ensued.

Another time there was clear evidence that an attempt had been made to enter her dressing-room at home, with what intention there could be little doubt. The attempt, however, had been foiled, but even had it been successful the thieves would not have found the booty they were doubtless in search of, the Earl having taken the precaution to deposit the necklace and other valuables with his bankers only a few days previously. Knowing, as he did, how forgetful his wife often was, even over matters of much importance, it was not to be wondered at that his lordship sometimes felt an uneasy qualm with regard to the safety of the family jewels.

In the present instance, in order that there might be no mistake in the matter, her ladyship, before leaving Grosvenor Square, had with her own hands put the case under the seat of the brougham. A larger case, containing less valuable articles, was in charge of Piper, her maid. All had gone well till King's Cross was reached. Here the Earl, alighting first, went forward at once into the booking-hall. Half a minute later her ladyship followed him, carrying Carlo under one arm, but serenely forgetful of the fate of the jewel-case left under the seat of the brougham. The Earl had obtained his tickets and was counting his change, when a horrible recollection flashed across her ladyship's brain. Setting Carlo unceremoniously down, she ran across the booking-hall in a very undignified manner for a countess, and was just in time to see the brougham disappear round the corner on its way back from the station.

A porter was despatched after it at full speed, and five minutes later Lady Ennerdale had the satisfaction of having the jewel-case placed in her hands. Then it was that the Earl, who had followed her out, had said to her in his iciest tones: "You will certainly either lose that case, or have it stolen from you, one of these days." It was his only rebuke, but her ladyship felt it keenly. She was thankful when Fairmead was reached, and the case safely deposited, for the time being, in Mr. Nugent Dawson's strong-room.

When Emily Standish, the daughter of a poor commoner of good family, became the wife of the Earl of Ennerdale everybody said that she had married for position, and to a certain extent everybody was right. But when everybody said it was impossible that she could ever love her husband—a man nearly twice her age—a man whose days and nights were given up to fighting the battles of the Opposition—then everybody for once proved to be in the wrong. When Lady Ennerdale married her husband she respected him greatly, and liked him a little. By the time her wedding ring was six months old she had learned to love him in all sincerity—also to fear him a little, which latter was perhaps a wholesome state of feeling, seeing that with the best heart in the world her ladyship was still somewhat of a feather-brain.

Some of her friends who had never experienced more than a tepid liking for their husbands could not imagine what the Countess could see in a man like Ennerdale to make her so *tête montée* about him. To them he seemed nothing more than a high-dried, undemonstrative Scotchman who wore check trousers and thick shoes, and talked with a north-country burr, and who was rarely to be seen without a Blue Book in close proximity to him. They had never penetrated that husk of shyness in which the hard-headed Scotchman shut himself up from all save a few intimates. They remembered that when a young man, and before he came into the title, he had been noted for his eccentricities and quaint practical jokes. But they did not know, or else they had conveniently forgotten, that he had been equally noted for goodness of heart, and a free-handed generosity that

had often made him the victim of designing knaves. Time had doubtless taught him the wisdom of reticence in many ways, but it had not spoilt his good heart, as his wife was not long in finding out. In his love she found a safe and sunny anchorage from which there was no danger of her ever drifting away.

Christmas Eve was here, and there was to be a grand dinner-party at Fairmead. "I shall wear my diamond necklace to-night," said Lady Ennerdale to her maid.

"The very thing, my lady, to go with your pink satin," remarked Piper, obsequiously.

Tea was set out in Mrs. Nugent Dawson's boudoir for such of the ladies as chose to partake of it previously to dressing for dinner. To several of them this half-hour's interlude of tea and gossip, to which the gentlemen were not admitted, was one of the most agreeable episodes of the day. Before going downstairs this evening, Lady Ennerdale passed out of her own room and through the bed-room into her husband's dressing-room beyond. His lordship was busy among his letters, as he generally was at this time of the day.

"Hard at work as usual," said Lady Ennerdale, as she stooped and touched her husband's forehead lightly with her lips.

"The post leaves in half an hour, and I have three letters still to answer," replied the Earl. "After that I shall go down to the library."

"I thought of wearing my diamonds to-night," said her ladyship.

"To be sure, my dear, why not? Dawson has got the case locked up in his strong-room. Piper has only to ask for it."

As the Countess went down stairs she met Piper coming up with the jewel-case, which Mr. Dawson had just handed to her. Six o'clock was striking as they passed each other.

Whilst Lady Ennerdale was taking tea, Piper thought it would be a good opportunity for her to spend half an hour in the servants' hall. No one loved a gossip more than Piper, and it was not in her nature to resist any occasion of gratifying her weakness. No sooner had she safely conveyed the jewel-box into Lady Ennerdale's dressing-room, than she slipped down stairs on her own account, and in a few moments was plunged in the delights of a violent flirtation.

Time passes quickly when thus employed, and when Piper thought that twenty minutes had gone she was horrified to find that nearly an hour had elapsed since she first came down. The remembrance of the neglected jewel-case flashed across her, and jumping up with a shriek that considerably startled her companions, and put all romantic notions to flight, she quitted the room with as much haste as ghosts are said to disappear at cock-crow.

Seven o'clock was striking as Piper hurried back up stairs. Time had passed so pleasantly that for once she was really frightened to find how late it was. She hoped most devoutly that her mistress was not waiting for her, and as she ran up stairs her ready brain coined a pleasant little fiction with which to turn away the sting of her ladyship's anger.

On trying the door of the dressing-room Piper found it locked. She gave a timid little knock, to which there was no response. Then she knocked again, more loudly, and cried in her affected tones, "My lady—are you there?" Still no answer. Then she went to the next door in the corridor, which was that of the Countess's bed-room. That also was locked, as was the third door she tried, which opened into the Earl's dressing-room. Slightly puzzled, Piper went down again at full speed. Meeting another servant, she said, "Have the ladies done tea yet?" but before she could be answered, the Countess came out of Mrs. Dawson's boudoir.

"I was just coming down to look for your ladyship," said Piper, glibly, but not without a guilty feeling at her heart.

"Coming to look for me, Piper?"

"To ask your ladyship for the key of the dressing-room. The door's locked and I can't get in."

"My dressing-room door locked! What do you mean?"

"I just ran down stairs to the housekeeper's room to get a bit of camphor for my hollow tooth," replied the ready-tongued Piper. "I was half distracted with face-ache, my lady. I had to wait while Mrs. Drabble found the camphor, though I couldn't have been away more than five minutes, but when I got back upstairs I found the dressing-room door locked, and nobody answered when I knocked."

"What became of my jewel-case while you were away from the room?"

"I left it unlocked on the dressing-table ready for your ladyship," answered Piper, more timidly than she had yet spoken.

"You left my jewel-case on the dressing-table while you went down stairs, and did not even take the precaution to lock the door after you!" said the Countess, in a tone of high displeasure. "What unpardonable carelessness!"

"I am very sorry, my lady," returned Piper humbly, for she was really alarmed at the responsibility she had incurred by leaving the room. "But no doubt the jewel-case is quite safe."

"Safe!" echoed the Countess, turning cold at the bare idea of its being anything else. "What do you mean, Piper? You really deserve a month's warning for such imprudence."

They had been slowly ascending the stairs as they talked, and had reached the dressing-room by this time. Without further parley her ladyship turned the handle, but only to find that the door was really locked. Then she knocked and said, "James, are you there?" but there came no response.

Piper meanwhile had tried the two other doors and found that they also were still locked. "This is Ennerdale's doing," said the Countess to herself. "He has found my jewel-case on the table, as Piper left it, and has locked the doors by way of teaching us to be more careful in future." She was seriously annoyed. Nothing was more vexing to her than to be found fault with by her husband,

and she knew that in the present case he would not hold her blameless. He would say that she ought to have given Piper a special caution not to leave the room while the jewel-case was about.

"See whether you can find Lord Ennerdale," she said to Piper, "and say that I should like to see him as quickly as possible."

Away went Piper in fear and trembling. There was only one man in the world of whom she stood in awe, and that man was the Earl. She found him in the library alone, immersed in some rare folio, and delivered her message. He answered her with a nod—being a man of few words—and shutting up his book at once, proceeded up stairs in a leisurely way, whistling under his breath, and jingling the loose change in his pocket as he went. Piper followed, quaking at heart.

The Earl found his wife with a shawl thrown round her, pacing the cold corridor. "I want to get into my dressing-room," she said to him, with a little impatience in her tone. "Be good enough to open the door. I shall hardly be dressed in time for dinner."

The Earl looked at her and tugged at his whiskers.

"Open the door of your dressing-room?" he said. "And pray what is the matter with the door that I should be fetched all the way from the library to open it?"

"As if you did not know! It is locked, of course, as is also the bed-room door and that of your dressing-room. But do make haste and open it. Of course it was excessively careless of Piper to leave the room while my jewel-case was in it, and I am ——"

"What!" almost shouted the Earl. "Your jewel-case left in the room and the doors found locked! Then, as sure as you live, it has been stolen!"

"But it was you who locked the door, was it not?" asked the Countess, with a sudden tremor in her voice.

The Earl made no answer in words, but dashing into the nearest bed-room that was open, he issued therefrom next moment, poker in hand. Using this implement as a lever, for insertion between the door and the jamb, the Earl, after half a dozen powerful wrenches, contrived to burst open the door of his wife's dressing-room. He rushed in, followed by the Countess, and, at a more modest distance, by Piper. The tale told itself in a moment. One of the two windows was wide open. The candles in the sconces were all blown out save one. An overturned chair, a shattered vase, and Lady Ennerdale's jewel-case nowhere to be seen.

"Robbed, by Jove! Just as I thought," cried the Earl with a groan. For the first time in her life Lady Ennerdale fainted. Her husband was just in time to catch her, or she would have fallen. Piper showed symptoms of coming hysterics.

"Hold your tongue, you idiot!" cried the Earl sternly, "and attend to your mistress. It is all through your carelessness that this has happened."

While Piper attended to the Countess, the Earl lighted another

candle and explored the two remaining rooms. But before doing this he took a glance at the open window. He had made up his mind that he should find a ladder outside, and he did find one. The mode by which the thief or thieves had obtained ingress to the room was at once apparent.

The three doors were locked on the inside, and the keys of two of them were still in the locks. The third key was afterwards found on the carpet. At a cursory glance no further property than the jewel-case seemed to be missing, a fact which subsequent examination fully confirmed. In the Earl's dressing-room was a large and heavy travelling-trunk of peculiarly substantial make. Stooping down to examine this, his lordship was startled to see certain marks round the lock which plainly indicated that someone had been trying to force it. The Earl turned pale as he examined the marks by the aid of his candle. "How fortunate that they did not succeed in breaking it open," he exclaimed under his breath.

There was a writing-table close by, which the Earl next proceeded to examine. The lock of this had been violently forced, but the contents, being nothing but letters and documents, had not been interfered with. An Indian cabinet of rare workmanship, which stood on a table in the bed-room, had also been broken open, but nothing taken out of it. Money or jewellery had evidently been the object of the thieves' quest, but not finding either, they had declined to burden themselves with any meaner spoil, and contenting themselves with the case which contained the diamond necklace, the emerald bracelet, and a few other articles, they had decamped as quietly as they had come. It was most fortunate that the other case, in which was the Countess's own collection of jewels, was still in Mr. Dawson's strong-room, or that also would undoubtedly have been taken.

While the Earl was looking about in much perturbation of spirit, his eye was caught by some strange object on the floor. He stooped and picked it up. It proved to be a chisel—the implement, undoubtedly, with which the writing-desk and the Indian cabinet had been forced open, and which had tested the strength of the Earl's travelling-trunk.

"It's all a mystery. I was never more puzzled in my life," said the Earl to himself, as he put the chisel in his pocket and went back to his wife's dressing-room. "Who on earth can have done it?"

And yet there seemed nothing about the affair that need have puzzled his lordship. What could be more admirably simple than the way the robbery had been planned and carried out. A ladder, a window, an empty room, a little box that a man might stow away in his great-coat pocket. Of a surety there was nothing mysterious in all this.

Her ladyship was lying on the sofa, pale but conscious, when her husband entered the dressing-room.

"Go downstairs and ask Mr. Dawson to be good enough to step up and see me," said the Earl to Piper as he shut the window which the thieves had left open; "and see that, at present, you don't say a word to anyone about the robbery."

"Can you ever forgive me, James?" asked the Countess timidly from the sofa.

"I suppose I shall have to try to do so," answered the Earl a little grimly.

"I shall never forgive myself," said the Countess with tears in her voice. To this her husband made no response. With the assistance of his double eye-glass he was examining the marks left by a large and dirty boot on the chintz covering of a chair near the window.

"Don't you think, dear, that there's any chance of our recovering the—stolen property?" asked the Countess, after a pause.

"Not the remotest, I should say," was the sententious answer.

"But what shall I do?" returned Lady Ennerdale in distress. "My best jewels are gone—I have nothing left to wear."

The Countess was discouraged and buried her face in the pillows. If he would but have talked to her! There would have been some consolation in that, however slight. She never felt so near disliking her husband as when he withdrew himself into himself—"just as if he were a snail," as the Countess sometimes said—and would not talk to her, would hardly even answer her questions. But it was not often that he treated her thus. Perhaps the very rarity of such treatment made her feel it all the more when she had to submit to it.

Mr. Dawson came tramping up stairs as though he were tramping over one of his own turnip fields. A heavy man, with a red, good-humoured face and long sandy whiskers—a modern bucolic Englishman. Three minutes sufficed to put him in possession of the facts of the case so far as they were known.

"Send for the police without a minute's delay," was his first oracular utterance, and he rang the bell as he spoke. "Capital fellow, Baylis, our head constable at Crampton. We'll have the county scoured from end to end before we're six hours older. Every tramp, vagabond, and suspicious character shall be popped into the lock-up and made to prove where he was and what he was about this evening." He spoke in such loud, cheerful, confident tones that his words diffused quite a warm glow of hope through the Countess's chilled heart.

"And do you really think, Mr. Dawson, that we shall recover the necklace?" she asked in anxious tones.

"I'm sure I hope so, my dear lady. I don't see why we shouldn't. These clever rogues generally overreach themselves in one way or another, and as I said before, Baylis is an uncommonly sharp fellow." Then to a servant who had answered his ring: "Tell Tompkins to take the dogcart, drive over to Crampton, and bring back Baylis, the

head constable. He's not to lose a minute. I shall expect him back in an hour and a half from now."

Turning to the Earl, Mr. Dawson added: "If you'll allow me, my dear Ennerdale, I'll take this inquiry entirely into my own hands."

"I wish you would," said the Earl. "It's altogether out of my line, as you know." Then he handed to his host the chisel which he had picked up.

"The ladder they no doubt got from the tool-house," said Mr. Dawson. "There would be no difficulty about that. But the fact of their making your wife's dressing-room their point of attack, and walking off with her jewel-case and nothing else, would seem to indicate that the thieves knew quite well what they were about. In fact, there can be no doubt that they knew Lady Ennerdale had brought her diamonds with her, and knew equally well which was the likeliest place to find them. Clever rogues!"

Lady Ennerdale did not go down to dinner that evening, but the Earl ate his mutton and played his rubber afterwards as quietly as if nothing had happened. He had been more or less of a philosopher all his life. If the jewels were gone, he argued, it would only make the loss worse by worrying about it. A happy faculty, perhaps, that many of us might envy; but one that, carried to extreme, might lead to indolent inaction.

"You see, dear, Ennerdale is such a philosopher," said the Countess to Mrs. Nugent Dawson, who had gone up stairs to sit with her friend and administer such comfort as might be possible under the circumstances. "I sometimes wonder whether he has any nerves at all. I believe if an earthquake were to take place his first care would be to have his beloved blue-books dug out of the ruins. I wish I could be a philosopher," added the poor Countess with a sigh.

Previously to this the Ennerdales had been accommodated with another suite of rooms, their old ones being given over for a time to the police. Baylis, accompanied by Mr. Dawson, who transformed himself into a detective for the time being and quite enjoyed the assumption, went thoroughly into the affair. They tramped up stairs and down, they scoured the gardens and shrubbery, they wagged their heads solemnly, they whispered confidentially to each other, although nobody was by, and now and then they tempered the keenness of the December weather with seasonable potations of whiskey toddy. All night long, after he had gone to bed thoroughly fagged out, Mr. Nugent Dawson, like the Squire of Locksley Hall, hunted in his dreams, only it was burglars and not foxes that he chased through the realms of sleep.

When Lord Ennerdale retired for the night he found his wife asleep, her pillow wet with tears. His face softened as he looked at her. Stooping, he touched her cheek softly with his lips. The action awoke her. She grasped one of his hands in both hers. "Oh!

James, what shall I do?" she cried, and the tears trembled afresh on her eyelids.

"Do, Mamie? It seems to me that the best thing you can do is to go to sleep again." He so seldom called her by her pet name that she felt herself half forgiven already.

"I am so very sorry ——" she began.

"Not another word to-night, an' thou lovest me," said the Earl, as he laid a finger lightly on her lips. "It's no use crying over spilt milk. The diamonds are gone, more's the pity, but all the fretting in the world won't bring them back."

"How I wish, darling, I could be a philosopher like you."

The Earl's only reply was a shrug of the shoulders.

Next day, which was Christmas Day, some half-dozen tramps were arrested at different places on suspicion of being implicated in the burglary at Fairmead. The following day saw all of them released but one. In the pockets of the one in question were found a set of skeleton keys. He had been seen loafing about for two or three days previously, drinking at this and the other low public-house, but never far away from Fairmead. In addition to all this, the account he gave of his comings and goings on the evening of the burglary was anything but satisfactory. He was remanded on suspicion, and Mr. Nugent Dawson and Lord Ennerdale were at once communicated with.

Next morning the two gentlemen drove over to the justice-room at Crampton. "An ill-conditioned cur as one would see in a day's march," was Mr. Dawson's comment as the prisoner was brought in.

"We should all have a hangdog look if we hadn't been shaved for a week and had an ugly scar running right across one cheek, as that fellow has," said the Earl. "He's not the sort of man, to my mind, who would be likely to plan and carry out such a robbery as ours."

The case against the prisoner was so suspicious that the magistrate remanded him for a week in order to give the police time to make further inquiries respecting his antecedents. At the end of the week nothing further had been elicited tending to criminate him. The grave fact still remained that a set of skeleton keys had been found in his possession, but it could not be shown that he was in any way mixed up with the robbery at Fairmead. The magistrate made up his mind to commit him for a month as a rogue and vagabond. "Poor devil! why not let him go?" said Lord Ennerdale, who was seated on the bench.

"Do you really mean it?" asked the magistrate, in surprise.

"I do. I shall take it as a favour if you will let him go scot free. There is no case against him, and he has suffered nine days' imprisonment already. Surely a sufficient punishment for being taken up on suspicion."

Accordingly the prisoner was discharged with a caution to get away from the neighbourhood as quickly as possible.

"Had not Lord Ennerdale so kindly interceded for you, you would certainly have been committed for a month," were the magistrate's parting words.

As Mr. Dawson and the Earl were driving back to Fairmead they overtook their quondam prisoner, who was trudging wearily along the high road, leaving Crampton behind him. Mr. Dawson reined up his horse for a moment. "Hi! you fellow," he called out. "Don't let your face be seen in these parts again, or you won't get off so easily next time."

The Earl said nothing, but tossed the man a sovereign. He caught it dexterously, and put it into his pocket. "Thank you heartily, my lord," he said, carrying a finger to his forehead. "If we had a few more like you there wouldn't be half so many thieves in the world."

"Then you admit that you are a thief?" said Mr. Dawson drily.

"Whatever I am," said the man, "I wish I may never see the sun set again if it was me as took the lady's diamonds!"

"Gammon!" ejaculated Mr. Dawson, contemptuously, as he flicked his horse with the whip, and in another minute the man was left far behind.

Mr. Dawson preserved a sulky silence the rest of the way home. He was annoyed with the Earl for what he called his "sentimental tomfoolery." Then he consoled himself by saying, "But Ennerdale always was noted for his eccentricities, and this is only one more added to the number."

The Ennerdale robbery was a nine days' wonder, as such affairs always are, and formed material for a paragraph in every newspaper in the kingdom. The Earl was persuaded into offering a large reward, but nothing came of it; and as he had said from the first that nothing would come of it, he could hardly be disappointed. Such ladies of the Countess's acquaintance as had diamond necklaces of their own, sympathized deeply with her in her loss, but whether they were really sorry at heart was best known to themselves. The Countess, knowing what great store her husband had set by the family jewels, sometimes felt doubtful whether he had really forgiven her. Although he hardly ever alluded to the subject, she often fancied that there was a shade of coldness in his manner towards her, such as she had never noticed before. Still, it might be nothing more than fancy on her part, but she worried herself all the more in secret because she was not quite positive as to its existence.

Time went on, bringing with it another Christmas in due course. On Christmas Eve, Lord and Lady Ennerdale were dining by themselves at their house in London. They had finished a round of country visits only two days previously, and were glad to be alone for a little while.

"Do you remember what happened this night a year ago?" asked the Earl, when the servants had left the room.

"Can I ever forget it? Never a day passes, or a night either for that matter, but what I mourn for my poor lost necklace."

"Should you not like another one?"

"Yes—and No."

"Explain yourself."

"Show me the woman who would not like to have a diamond necklace. But if I had another I should be for ever worrying myself about its safety. I should never feel happy except when it was locked up at your bankers'."

"When I called in at Hunt and Roskell's this afternoon they showed me such a lovely necklace."

"Ah!"

"Your mouth would have watered had you seen it. They only wanted six thousand guineas for it."

"Only, James! Who would be mad enough to spend six thousand guineas on a necklace?"

"Plenty of people. Why, the one that you lost—or rather the one that was stolen from you—was worth considerably more than that."

"And then it was a family jewel, which made it still more valuable," said the Countess, with a sigh.

"Precisely so," said the Earl, drily. He peeled himself a walnut before he spoke again. His wife sat gazing sadly into the fire.

"Now listen to me," said the Earl. "You know that I have been saving up for some time past in order that I might buy a certain piece of land which is sure to come to the hammer when poor old Twenty-man dies—and the doctors gave him up several weeks ago. But I have been thinking that as it must be very annoying to you to have no necklace to wear, and as Hunt's people have such a magnificent sample on sale, I could not do better than invest six thousand guineas of my savings in the purchase of it. After all, you know, I don't see why I need bother about that land. It was only a little fancy of mine that I should like to have it. Nothing more."

For a minute the Countess sat without speaking. Then she said, "You shall make no such sacrifice for me, James. I have made up my mind never to wear another diamond necklace as long as I live, so you need never offer to buy one for me."

"Think twice before you decide."

"I have thought."

"Is that your ultimatum?"

"It is—most emphatically." Then she rose and went round to where her husband was sitting, and putting her arms round his neck, she stooped and kissed him. "You are too good to me. I don't deserve so much kindness," she murmured; and the Earl felt a tear on his forehead.

He peeled another walnut and ate it in silence. Then he rose. "Excuse my leaving you," he said. "I shall be back in three minutes."

Before the three minutes had expired he was back again. The Countess, sitting in a dejected attitude before the fire, did not look up as he entered. He crossed the room to her and bent over the back of her chair. "You said just now that you would never wear a diamond necklace again. Will you refuse to wear this one?"

She looked up, startled. There was a moment's silence, and then she gave vent to an inarticulate cry of surprise and delight. She could hardly credit the evidence of her eyes. There, before her, in the old, worn, well-remembered case, she saw the diamond necklace and the emerald bracelet of which she had been robbed a year ago that night.

"Oh, my darling, what does it all mean?" she contrived to gasp out.

"It means that your jewels have come back to you as mysteriously as they went. Let us hope that you will know how to take better care of them in time to come."

"Then the thieves have been caught, and ——"

"The thief stands before you. I am that felonious individual."

"You, James? Oh!"

"Yes, I." Taking the necklace out of its case, he clasped it round his wife's neck, then he drew up a chair and sat down opposite to her. "You are dying for an explanation?" he said.

"I am indeed." She could not resist standing up and glancing at herself for a moment in the glass over the chimney-piece. Then she sat down again with a sigh of supreme satisfaction.

"After I had finished my letters that evening," began the Earl, "I went into your dressing-room to ask you a question. You were not there."

"I had gone down to Mrs. Dawson for a cup of tea," interrupted Lady Ennerdale.

"Very probably, my dear," returned the Earl drily. "As I say, you were not there; neither was Piper, but on the dressing-table was your jewel-case ready for anyone to pocket who might choose to do so. To say that I was not annoyed would not be to state the truth. All at once it came into my head that I would try to commit an amateur burglary and carry off the casket in order to prove to you how easily it might have been stolen in reality. While out in the morning, I had noticed a ladder resting against a wall near the tool-house which it seemed to me would answer my purpose. When I got out into the shrubbery not a creature was about. The night was a very cold one and a light snow was falling. Five minutes later I had climbed the ladder, pushed open the window of your dressing-room, and had made myself master of your jewel-case. Nothing could be more easy."

"Good gracious! James, however dared you do such a thing?"

"Having got possession of the case, I walked through the bed-room into my own dressing-room, unlocked my big travelling-trunk, popped the case into it, relocked the trunk, and went back by the way I came, that is to say, through the window and down the ladder. I was

quietly chuckling to myself over your discomfiture when Piper found me in the library and told me that you wanted me."

"What an adventure! What a capital professional burglar you would make! You must have been changed at nurse, dear," said the Countess. The Earl laughed. "It is my turn to be angry at having such a trick played off upon me, and I am not quite sure yet that I shall forgive you," continued her ladyship.

"Wait till you have heard all."

"How absurd of you to lock the doors and give yourself the trouble of forcing an entrance."

"It was not I who locked the doors. It was not I who forced open the Indian casket, or the writing-table, or who tried to break into my travelling-trunk. I left no chisel on the floor, nor was that the mark of my boot on the chintz covering of the chair near the window."

The Countess was staring at him with parted lips and frightened eyes. "If you did not do these things, who was it that did them?"

"A man, a professional burglar, who found his way into the room a few minutes after I had left it, with the full intention of stealing your diamond necklace. He was baulked in the attempt, but had I not fortunately been first in the field, and taken possession of the case, you would certainly never have set eyes on it again."

"But how did you find out this?"

"On one of the men who was taken up on suspicion was found a bunch of skeleton keys. This of itself was very suspicious, but nothing further could be traced to connect him with the supposed burglary. Had I not interfered in his behalf, Colonel Rawson would have given him a month's imprisonment as a rogue and vagabond; but knowing well he was not the thief, I saw no reason why he should be thus punished. Meeting him accidentally afterwards, I gave him a sovereign. It would seem that the fellow did not forget what I had done for him. About three months ago he got into some more serious difficulty, and then he wrote me a rude sort of epistle in which he told me that he had followed us down from London to Fairmead fully intending to steal the necklace. That he had obtained access to your dressing-room by means of the ladder so conveniently placed there, but that, to his intense disgust, no jewel-case was to be found. 'It seems to me that some one had been there afore me,' added my friend in conclusion. That 'some one,' as you know already, was myself."

"James," said Lady Ennerdale, humbly, "you have indeed rendered me a service and taught me a lesson. If ever I am careless again, I shall deserve a greater punishment than this has been to me."

"I am not afraid, my love," replied the Earl, kissing his wife. "As you say, it has been a lesson to you, and I see that you have learnt it well."

THE FULNESS OF THE WORLD.

BY THE REV. T. S. CUNNINGHAM.

I.

HE wandered on the shining sands—
 The shining sands, when tides were low,
 What time the rising sun had set
 The white cliffs all aglow.
 He looked away, and yet away,
 Beyond the shingle bordered bar,
 To where the ships, the white-sailed ships,
 Lay all becalmed afar.
 And chequered lights and shadows soft
 Touched purple moor and far-off hill,
 That mellowed on the golden fields,
 On barn, and croft, and mill.
 The swishing of the busy scythe,
 And hum of voices, melt and merge
 In numberless uncertain sounds,
 To music with the surge.
 And past him, fluttered up and down,
 A butterfly, striped black and red,
 A glinting, glancing, careless thing—
 “The world is full of Life,” he said.

II.

He wandered through the noisy streets—
 The noisy streets, so cold and grim,
 Where yellow lights, and yellow fog,
 Made darkness still more dim.
 He listened to the ceaseless strife ;
 The voice alike of young and old ;
 Where all things precious, all things vile,
 At bid, were bought and sold.
 A dream of faces passed him by,
 In broad highway, and narrow lane,
 Until the breathless tumult seemed
 One everlasting pain !
 On through the mists, and through the chill,
 With draggled black, and shouting train,
 The parish coffin hurried past,
 Into the sooty rain !

A soul gone forth ! a body laid
Mid dusty nettles, rank and tall :
Six feet of clay, a few rough boards—
Hid and forgot of all !
What of the restless up and down ?—
The joy—the sin—the toil for bread ?
The bitter work of heart and brain ?—
“ The world is full of Death,” he said.

III.

He wandered down a forest path—
A forest path where shadows fall—
And round his way the tangled trees
Encircled, like a wall.
He looked to right, he looked to left,
Where rain-soaked mouldered leaves were seen,
Until there peered from out the wreck
A primrose, golden-green :
A token of the by-and-by—
New promise, out of old decay,
The present linking, one with one,
Future and past alway.
The rugged blackthorn hedge was thick
With shining buds of pearly round,
And hazel tassels, in the brakes,
Were scattered on the ground.
Still hung forlorn the broken nests,
Which winter winds had spared till now ;
But new bird-builders toiled and wrought
In bush, and branch, and bough.
Not swift of working, but most sure,
Both life, and death, and good, and ill,
By constant interchange of place,
Purpose most high fulfil.
Wisdom is great ! Yet who hath taught
Her wisdom ? Who hath set in tune
This constant order of the earth ?
After December, June ?
Who, like the sweet musician throned
Behind the organ's many keys,
With here and there a magic touch
Weaveth great symphonies ?
Who, without fault of human flaw,
Hath order, both for quick and dead ?
A master-worker, wise and strong !—
“ The world is full of GOD ! ” he said.

MADAME DE STAEL.

IN the year 1766 there was joy one day in the house of M. Necker, the rising young man who was beginning to make such a mark for himself in political life, for a little daughter had been born to him ; but it was a sober, measured joy, for the young mother was one of the most strict followers of the severe sect of Calvinists. The child, before she could well speak plainly, was remarkable for sharp, piquant little sayings, which set *bonnes* and lady visitors in a roar, and the wondrously expressive pantomime which accompanied her talk, added yet a further and most irresistible charm to her many graceful whims and conceits.

Louise's first toy—a toy, too, of her own special imagining and invention—caused her Calvinist mother no small exercising of mind. One or two of the servants had paid stolen visits to the play-house, and had whispered much together in the child's hearing about its glittering wonders. Mademoiselle Louise knew well enough that she should never be permitted by her mother to go to such a place of amusement, but why should she not have a theatre of her own? The question went whirling hither and thither through her restless young mind, until it brought forth unexpected fruit.

One morning the little lady begged an old box of her *bonne*, and that much-enduring personage was most agreeably surprised to find how entirely this seemingly insignificant present occupied, in some strange, mysterious way, all the energies of her lively, quicksilver-like charge. What was her astonishment when she found the box transformed into a miniature stage, with a few coloured prints for scenery. On these boards her dolls were made dexterously to perform their entries and exits, the dramatic company was strengthened by several skilfully cut-out and painted paper figures, the dialogue was supplied by the young manageress herself, who now went off into long ripples of laughter at her own wit, and now sobbed passionately behind her pinafore at her own pathos.

In all the April sorrows of her childhood, and all its rainbow-tinted joys, little Louise had one unfailingly sympathizing friend, one untiring playfellow ; this was her father. M. Necker was a singularly sweet-tempered, cheery-natured man, and his little daughter was not slow to find out this. Her father's knee was a sure haven of safety to which she could fly whenever the wrath of mother, aunt, or governess pursued her with Juno-like persistency. Her father's ear was always a willing receptacle for every new fairy fancy. With her small arms clasped around that well-loved neck, with her head nestling on that trusted breast, she felt as if she might bid defiance to the whole world. Besides, this strong affection for her father was to prove no

feeling which was to slip away out of Louise Necker's heart and life. As she grew from girl to woman, and fresh and closer ties formed themselves around her, it was to tinge in a certain way her whole story, and we still find notes of it in "*Corinne*," where Oswald laments his father's loss.

One of the ways in which Louise showed, in her childhood, her devoted love for her father was, to say the least, a very extraordinary and characteristic one for a girl of her age. This little incident took place when she was about ten, and as it calls up before us an amusing picture out of the panorama of her varied life, we will pause to gaze for a moment at it.

There are brilliant lights this evening, and the ring of many voices in the salon. Madame Necker is giving a party. The house of the Neckers is famous throughout all Paris for the number of men of wit and intellect whom it often gathers beneath its roof in its frequent reunions. To-night, to judge by the flash of bright intelligence in every face, by the sparkles of airy fun which fly from lip to lip, by the deep, thoughtful earnestness in the eyes of some of the guests, who, a little apart from the gayer throng, are speaking of high, grave themes in knots of two or three together, there must be more men of mark than usual here.

By-and-by there is a slight stir at the door of the room, many eyes are turned towards it with a kindly light in them, many a playful word is on each lip, and all this greets a small, daintily-dressed figure which comes dancing up the salon. The gentlemen try to make her stop to exchange a few saucy words with them, the ladies stretch out their arms to draw her on to their laps; but to-night, very contrary to her usual custom, the young lady heeds none of their blandishments; there is a set, intent look on her face, and she is evidently pre-occupied, and completely filled with some strong, ruling idea. Her mother tries to get her to take her usual seat on a stool at her feet, but quickly seeing that the little maiden is in no flexible mood, desists, not wishing for a scene before company. On goes the girl through rows of gleaming silks and waving fans, through long lines of powdered gentlemen; until she reaches a corner, where her father sits engaged in absorbing talk with a short, dark man, who speaks French with a strong, rather harsh, foreign accent, and whose face is all ablaze with keen, intellectual fire; yet, though that face is so clever, we do not exactly like it, and we feel we could never love it. There is something uncomfortable in the steel-like glitter of the eyes, and the sarcastic smile which flickers round the mouth; somehow it makes us think of a fine polished Toledo blade. Genial-looking Monsieur Necker, however, seems to take great pleasure in this gentleman's society, and the pair appear to understand each other.

When little Louise draws near, the two men cease their serious talk, the guest begins a merry, fantastic tale for her edification, her father calls her with many a loving, playful wile to his side, but the

child seems in no humour for fun of any sort this evening ; she has something far too grave in hand, something about which no joke must be made. Her father and his friend cast amused, wondering glances at each other, and cannot at all guess what is coming next. But whatever strange, impossible conjectures they may have made on the subject, they are most completely outdone by the words which now come from Mademoiselle Louise's lips. She places herself between the two gentlemen with a grand, majestic air, and turning to the guest, says solemnly, while she fixes her eyes steadfastly on his face :

"Monsieur Gibbon, will you consent to a betrothal taking place at once between yourself and me? Because, you see, if I were to marry you, you would stay in France, and never go back to England, and then my father would always enjoy the pleasure of your conversation, in which he so delights, and I should know that I had obtained it for him."

If all things are considered, it was surely well for the young lady that she was ten instead of twenty when she made this proposal to the author of "*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*."

As Louise Necker grew into early girlhood, she began to show something of the vast, strong capacities for which her mind was afterwards so distinguished ; she displayed a decided aptitude for those deeper studies which are, in general, distasteful to the young female brain, and handled them as easily as most girls do their crochet needles. She delighted in looking into the history of nations, and in reading their annals by a light evolved by herself out of their past ; her imagination, too, kept pace with her reason, and she revelled in the poetry of all lands, for she was a clever linguist. Her pen soon was busy with something besides letter-writing, though even her parents hardly knew anything of what she was about ; until, one day, they and several of their intimate, learned friends were literally struck dumb by the girl of fifteen bringing them to read a treatise on the laws of her country.

At eighteen, Mademoiselle Necker's brilliant conversational powers were fully developed, and began to show themselves in society. She talked about everything ; about literature, religion, science, social troubles, politics ; sometimes rather wide of the mark, it is true, but always with brightness and originality. The worst of it was, however, that in those days, in France, young ladies of position did not talk in public at all. Even her father began to be a little frightened at the phenomenon which his house had produced, radiant phenomenon though it was, and to look about for some safe, responsible man, who would be willing to take the shining wonder out of his hands, and to hold it in secure keeping.

The Swedish ambassador at the French Court was a certain Baron de Stael. He was middle-aged, and a Protestant, and well-endowed as to worldly goods ; his intellect was not exactly as bright as a northern aurora borealis, but his private daily life was as steady-going as a

French diligence. He was just the sort of son-in-law Monsieur and Madame Necker wanted, and he showed a decided admiration and liking for their daughter. Through the influence of Queen Marie Antoinette, with whom Monsieur Necker was at this time something of a favourite, a marriage was arranged, and before she well knew what was happening to her, Louise found herself Madame de Stael.

The girl was not the least in love with her husband, but then it was the fate of every girl in France of her rank to be married without love ; so she resigned herself to her destiny without feeling that there was much to complain of in it. The marriage cannot be said to have been an unhappy one, though the pair were often separated for long periods, and though they knew nothing of what we call in England domestic, home life. Two children, a son and a daughter, were given to bless it, and no doubt Madame de Stael learned, as years went on, to feel a sincere, warm esteem for her husband. In after life, however, Madame de Stael came to express a strong disapproval of the loveless character of French marriages in general, in high life. She would say, with eager, tender earnestness, that her own daughter should marry for love, and for nothing else ; and when Mademoiselle de Stael reached years of discretion, she fully obeyed her mother's wishes in this respect in her choice of the young Duc de Broglie.

But to return to Madame de Stael in the first days of her married life. She now enjoyed far more freedom than she had ever done before. She had a house of her own, where she could gather round her all the friends she loved best ; she could talk as much as she pleased, because her being a married woman made all the difference ; she was near her beloved father, and could see him every day. Her brain and her pen were always busy. Altogether this was perhaps one of the calmest, happiest periods of her life. Probably her most uncomfortable experience at this time was when she had to attend at Court, as she had occasionally to do. Display of this kind never suited her ; her irregular features had nothing of the sort of beauty which looks well in a State pageant, though her hand and arm are said to have been statuesquely perfect. Her whole figure was too strongly developed for her to move with much grace ; she forgot, amid some grand wave of thought which came rushing over her, minute forms which she ought to have observed, and in the confusion consequent on such mistakes, with the eyes of many grand dames looking daggers at her, caught her feet in her train as she backed out of the presence of Royalty, or tore her rich lace in the crowd in the antechamber. The whole charm of her appearance always lay in her wondrous mobility of expression while she talked, and in the radiant splendour, now flashing lightning-like, now glowing soft as summer moonlight, of her dark, lustrous eyes. But loveliness of this kind did not shine much in the automaton drill which composed the ponderous gilded etiquette of the French court life.

When the first warning trumpet-note, which foretold the coming

revolution, rang through France, Madame de Stael, in common with many other great, liberal-minded men and women, who foresaw nothing of the horrors that were at hand, greeted it with joy. Her generous nature was always on the side of the weak and oppressed, and she thought a dawn of high and noble things for the common people was at hand. Her father shared, in a great measure, her views, and she had the triumph of seeing him placed at the head of public affairs as Prime Minister. But before long the spirit which Necker had helped to raise proved too strong for him to control; the fickle mob, who had burnt incense to him yesterday, now thronged round his door with wild threats on their lips, and his only hope for his life was secret and speedy flight. Then husband, children, political opinions, were forgotten and abandoned by Madame de Stael, and in such frantic haste that she had not time to change the evening dress she had on at the moment, she accompanied her father into exile. It seemed to her that that adored life would be safer if she were near to shield it, if needful, with her own.

The father and daughter went into Switzerland, and took up their abode at Coppet, on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. There they led a busy yet tranquil existence, filled with much reading and writing, and by the visits of many friends, who, refugees like themselves, came to settle near them. It was at this time her first great work of fiction, "Delphine," was published, and found at once a wide circulation. During the whole of her residence at Coppet, Madame de Stael's heart and mind turned, in grief and longing, towards her distracted country. Once, even, before the Reign of Terror was over, she returned for awhile to Paris, where, having some influence with a few of the revolutionary leaders, she put her own life in danger, and showed the most intrepid courage in her efforts to save men and women from the guillotine.

When the star of Napoleon began to rise, Madame de Stael greeted it with a hymn of glad homage, for its splendour dazzled her; she hastened to France, and took up her residence once more in Paris. As soon, however, as she perceived what false glitter there was in that radiance, and discovered that selfish tyranny and aggrandisement were the one rule of her hero's life, she changed her note. Bonaparte quickly found out her inimical feelings towards him, and the First Consul and the authoress of "Delphine" indulged in language about each other which was more remarkable for strength of expression than for elegance. At length the conqueror of a thousand fields began to be thoroughly afraid of this woman; her scathing wit lashed him wherever he turned. He felt she was indeed his mistress in a war of words, so he took summary and arbitrary revenge, and banished her from Paris, forbidding her to come within so many leagues of the capital.

But even in the quiet country retreat which now sheltered her, she knew she was not safe from the mighty wrath of Napoleon. Any

hour an order of arrest might come. One of her most devoted friends and admirers, M. D'Angillie, used to watch every night beneath her window to be ready to warn her if danger was at hand. Her life was one long dread, and great though her grief was at having again to leave her beloved country, it was perhaps almost a relief to her when a further decree of Napoleon banished her from French ground altogether.

Madame de Stael's life was now for several years one long history of wandering from one land to another. Now we find her in England, competing successfully in brilliancy of talk with Burke and Sheridan, taking Fanny Burney's heart by storm, and flirting, in somewhat too sentimental a way, perhaps, with the handsome young refugee, the Comte de Narbonne. Next she was in Germany, where Goethe and Schiller, unused as they were to much conversational power in German ladies, were a good deal exercised by her tongue, and where she published one of her best known books, "*L'Allemagne*." By-and-by she was in Berlin, where a great sorrow fell upon her in the news of her father's death. Her sorrow for that loss lasted as long as her own life, and, go where she might, Necker's picture always hung at her bedside.

In order to distract her mind, in some measure, from this great, overwhelming blow, she took a journey into Italy. There her imagination was fired with all she saw and heard, and she wrote "*Corinne*." We have no space here to dwell on this world-famed novel. It is a real prose poem, and its end and aim, on the whole, are noble.

Go where she might, and be employed as she might, one vast, sickening, yearning feeling always lay at the bottom of Madame de Stael's soul, muffling each note of praise, casting a grey cloud over each scene, however bright: this was her longing after her country, for her heart was French to the very core. Two or three times Napoleon's enmity against her slumbered so far that she gained admission, for a short time, into France; but in a few weeks her rebellious, keen pen and tongue were sure to say or write something which called forth against her a fresh decree of exile. Once she was told by some mediating friend that if she would write a poem to celebrate the birth of the little King of Rome, which had just then taken place, she would find her way speedily into Bonaparte's favour; but her only remark on this proposal was, "I don't see what I can say, except that I wish the child a good nurse." We can fancy that when this reply was reported at the Imperial Court it was not exactly received with smiles.

The Baron de Stael sometimes was with his wife, and sometimes they did not meet for long periods. Whenever he was near her, however, he always treated her with gentleness and consideration; he seems to have had real respect for her genius. When he died, which was while she was still comparatively young, she watched by him tenderly to the last, and her tears fell on his grave, as for a true and loyal friend.

Wherever she went Madame de Stael had a train of worshippers and admirers following her ; wherever she went, her voice was raised on the side of the injured and oppressed. She felt keenly that, in her day, women did not enjoy sufficient freedom and sufficient educational advantages, and she spoke aloud in their cause ; she stands out before us in middle-age a noble figure, ever ready to be the champion of the weak and to raise the fallen. Napoleon's mean hatred still went on pursuing her, and at length she was forbidden to go more than a certain number of miles beyond the shores of the Lake of Geneva, where, with memories of her father ringing in her heart, she had settled down.

When she was a few years past forty, Madame de Stael fell in with a certain young officer named de Rocca. She nursed him through a long illness, and such was still her charm that he became passionately in love with her. She responded to his feelings, and the pair were privately married. We may smile at the disparity of years in this union—de Rocca was but twenty-three ; and yet there is something deeply pathetic in this great woman of genius, thus a few short years before her death, enjoying a gleam of sweet home peace.

Madame de Stael lived to see the fall of Napoleon. She died in France at the age of fifty-one, with her husband's hand in hers, leaving a name for posterity.

ALICE KING.



"ALL FOR LOVE."

THUS may the angels work : but how should we—
 Frail, selfish men, whom offer of reward
 Or fear of retribution's sharp-edged sword
 Cannot persuade to virtue, and keep free
 From sin's hard bondage—dream to serve our Lord
 For love alone? It surely may not be.
 Yet doth obedience well with love accord ;
 And love still yields the truest fealty.
 The threat'ning heav'ns' loud crash and awful fire
 May call us to repentance ; make us raise
 Affrighted eyes to the great Throne above :
 But not till the cold heart is drawn by love
 Will the whole life be one of acted praise ;
 Our Father's smile sole guerdon we desire.

EMMA RHODES.

GWEN'S LOVER.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

PERHAPS you have never heard of Mr. David Owen of Carmarthenshire, but he was a great preacher among our people. He was a good man, and a kind of witty man too, but not very observant: or folks thought he was not, at any rate. Mrs. Owen was dead, and there was one girl, who lived at home with her father, and looked after his house; just the prettiest girl in all the neighbourhood; and good, too, I believe. Anyhow, the worst that could be said of her was that she was rather too much inclined to think a great deal of her own beauty.

Her name was Winifred; at least that is the English of it—for, you see, all the people about them spoke Welsh, and, of course, the names of the children were Welsh. But she was always called Gwen; and Gwen was thought much of both for her prettiness and because Mr. Owen was the minister, and so much respected.

There was a young man lived not far from Mr. Owen's who fell in love with Gwen, as a good many had done before him; and she for some reason or other—I am not wise in the ways of girls, and I don't know what it might be—was more good-natured to William Morgan than she had been to the others, and let him come about her more than anybody had done before. He was a handsome young fellow, the son of a farmer, and would have been a good enough match, if he had not been wild. But, as it was, all the neighbours knew that he was not at all fit for the minister's daughter, and very soon a great deal of talk arose about their being seen together, and his going to the house when Mr. Owen was likely to be out of the way.

At last, one of the neighbours got hold of Mr. Owen one day, and boldly attacked him upon the subject. "Keep an eye upon Gwen, Mr. Owen," said she, "and don't let her be encouraging that good-for-nothing." And then another came another day, and *he* said: "I hear that young vagabond is after Gwen, Mr. Owen." And when they had begun they went on, till Mr. Owen heard enough of Gwen and her sweetheart, you may be sure.

But the queer thing was that he seemed to take no notice of them all. He never answered, good or bad, when they spoke to him, and he never said a word to Gwen. Every other day the young man would be at the house, but he either came when Mr. Owen was away visiting, or else at night, when everybody but Gwen was gone to bed.

You see it used to be the custom, when two young people were courting, for the young man to go to see his sweetheart pretty late in the evening, so that they could have a little bit of talk comfortably by the kitchen fire after the others were gone away. The only thing

that was wrong about Gwen's lover was that she did not say anything to her father about his coming.

Well, one evening, when the nights were beginning to get pretty cold, Mr. Owen went up stairs as usual ; and whether he went to a little study he had, or whether he went to bed, Gwen did not know and did not care. She knew he would certainly not come down again that night ; and accordingly she opened the door and let in her sweetheart to spend an hour with her.

He was rather chilled with having waited longer than usual for her, so she drew up a settle with a high back close to the fire, and they sat down very comfortably and began to talk. I do not know what they talked about ; but so absorbing was the nature of their conversation, that they never heard or saw anything, till all of a sudden Mr. Owen looked over the top of the high back of the settle and said : " Good evening, my young friend ; I am very glad to see you."

Gwen jumped up in a great hurry ; William Morgan's arm remained stretched out for all the world as if it had been round her waist ; and Mr. Owen came round the settle to the hearth.

" It is a long time since I saw you," he went on, quite cheerfully and pleasantly ; " a long time ; and I should like very much to have a little talk with you. Will you come up stairs with me to my study ? I am very glad to see you here to-night."

The young man looked at Gwen, and Gwen looked at him, but they neither of them dared to say a word. Mr. Owen turned round and led the way up stairs, and as the young man followed him, Gwen gave him a little encouraging nod, just as much as to say, " I'll wait here for you till you come back."

Mr. Owen walked slowly up the stairs and into his study, and Gwen's sweetheart went after him, very much puzzled what was going to happen next. There was no fire upstairs, but there was a candle burning, and the big Bible open, with Mr. Owen's spectacles lying on it as if he had been reading ; and the big chair a little pushed back from the table, as he had pushed it when he got up and came down into the kitchen so unexpectedly.

" Take a seat," he said, giving the young man a chair. " It would be a great pleasure to me to see you here oftener, and to have a little reading together. But at any rate, we will take this opportunity. I'll read a chapter and expound a little as we go on."

" But, Mr. Owen," said the young man, " is not it getting late, please?"

Mr. Owen was turning over the leaves meantime, and did not seem to hear him at all. It was a big old Bible, with a black binding and metal clasps, and with the Apocrypha in it. Perhaps you mayn't have read the Apocrypha—so I may as well tell you that it contains some very long chapters—particularly in the first book of Maccabees, where they are mostly over sixty verses. The second, for instance, is seventy, and the tenth eighty-nine verses long, and all about the wars of the Jews.

Mr. Owen turned and turned, till he got what he wanted, and then he settled himself in his chair and looked in the friendliest manner at Gwen's sweetheart.

"Here it is," he said. "We will begin with the second chapter of the book of Maccabees."

"Mr. Owen, I am sure it is getting late, sir," the young man ventured to say again. But Mr. Owen only answered, "The second chapter of first Maccabees," and began to read.

The light was not good, and the minister read slowly. When he came to a full stop, he leaned back in his chair, took off his spectacles, and expounded what he had read. Then he went on again as far as the next full stop, and then he expounded again.

The young man began to wonder how long it would take to get through the chapter, and he thought half an hour would surely do it. But, you see, he never came to chapel, and he had not the very least idea what Mr. Owen, when he liked, could do in the way of exposition; and time went on, and it was amazing how long they were in getting to the twentieth verse. Before they did that he had begun to wonder whether Gwen would wait for him. "Perhaps she will go to sleep by the fire," he thought to himself—"or will she get tired of being there alone, and go to bed?"

He kept listening for any movement in the house, and when they were nearly half through the chapter he heard a step on the stairs. "That's Gwen," he said to himself again, and it was all he could do to keep from saying it aloud. The step went on very slowly; it even stopped for a moment outside the study; but after that it went on again, and then there was the sound of a door shutting with a little bit of a bang, and he knew he should see no more of Gwen that night.

All the while Mr. Owen kept going on reading and explaining, and looking at the young man now and then to see that he was awake. And the clock struck for the second time, and then the candle began to burn low, and Gwen's sweetheart thought to himself: "It won't be long now till the candle goes out, and then he must stop." But presently, when he was giving the explanation of something that was harder than usual, Mr. Owen perceived that the candle was almost gone, so he just turned round in his chair and opened a cupboard that was within reach of his hand. There was another candle, all ready, and he brought it out and lighted it, and blew out the short bit without ever making a single gap in his exposition. And then the young man did not know *what* to think.

You see there was hardly another minister in Wales that was as clever at expounding as Mr. Owen. I have known him preach from one text for more than two hours, so of course when he had got seventy verses to talk about he could not be expected to be at any loss. He was used to sitting up at night, too, and did not seem to see how Gwen's sweetheart was getting so tired he could hardly keep upright on his chair.

But, however, there is an end to everything. The end of the chapter did come nearer and nearer slowly, and still the nearer it came the more Mr. Owen had to say. The clock struck again, and then a cock, that had made some mistake about the time, began to crow.

It was getting colder every minute, and there was not the least hope of the second candle burning out. Mr. Owen seemed as fresh as when he began, and just as friendly and cheerful. The room began to get hazy; the candle seemed to have a halo round it, like the one the moon has sometimes. Mr. Owen seemed to be a long way off, or talking through a blanket. Sometimes he went out of sight altogether, and sometimes he looked like Merlin, or some old enchanter sitting there saying spells out of his big black book.

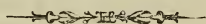
Well, he did stop at last; and he had hardly got the last words out of his mouth, and shut to the heavy book-cover with a bang, when the young man jumped up in a hurry.

"Are you going?" says Mr. Owen. "Well, perhaps it is time. Come again as soon as you can, my young friend, and then we'll read the tenth chapter of the same book."

"Good night, Mr. Owen," cried Gwen's sweetheart, as he hurried down the stairs. "Good night, and much obliged."

"I'm *very* glad to have seen you," Mr. Owen called after him. "Come again, whenever you like."

That is all the story; because, you see, he never did come again. And that was the way Mr. David Owen got rid of Gwen's sweetheart.



THE NEW YEAR.

WHAT time at Winter's touch,
 Earth doffs a little while her softer guise,
 And in his icy clutch
 Sweet nature like a swooning maiden lies;
 When the cold night stays long,
 And dim and scanty are the hours of day,
 And silent is the song
 Of piping birds that made the woodland gay;
 When boding hearts own nought
 But joy afar and desolation near,
 To still the ungracious thought
 Comes the rich promise of the glad New Year.
 Deep must the diver grope,
 When he would bring the purest pearl to light;
 And the fair gem of hope
 Could not be ours if all the way were bright.

SYDNEY GREY.



THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

AT CHENEVIX HOUSE.

IT was a magnificent room, everything magnificent about it, as it was fitting the library of Chenevix House should be: a fine mansion overlooking Hyde Park. What good is there to be imagined—worldly good—that fortune, so capricious in her favours, had not showered down upon the owner of this house, the Earl of Acorn? None. With his majority he had come into a princely income, for his father, the late earl, died years before, and the estates had been well nursed. Better had it been, though, for the young Earl of Acorn that he had been born a younger son, or in an inferior rank of life. With that spur to exertion, necessity, he would have pushed on and *exercised* the talents which had been liberally bestowed on him; but gliding as he did into a fortune that seemed unlimited, he plunged into every extravagant folly of the day, and did his best to dissipate it. He was twenty-one then; he is walking about his library now—you may see him if you choose to enter it—with four or five and thirty years added to his life: pacing up and down in perplexity, and possessing scarcely a shilling that he can call his own. His six-and-fifty years have rendered his figure somewhat portly, and an expression of annoyance is casting its shade on his clear brow and handsome features; but no deeper lines of sorrow are marked there. Not upon these careless natures does the hand of care leave its sign.

But the Earl is—to make the best of it—in a brown study, and he scowls his eyebrows, and purses his lips, and motions with his hands as he paces there, communing with himself. Not that he is so much perplexed as to how he shall escape his already great embarrassments, as he is to contrive the means to raise more money, and so rush into greater. The gratification of the present moment—little else ever troubled Lord Acorn,

A noise of a cab in the street, as it whirls along, and pulls up before the steps and the stately pillars of Chenevix House ; a knock and a ring that send their echoes through the mansion ; and the earl strides forward and looks cautiously from the window, so as to catch a glimpse of the horse and vehicle. It was but a glimpse, for the window was high from the ground, its embrasures deep, and the cab close to the pavement ; and, for a moment, he could not decide whether it belonged to friend or foe ; but soon he drew away with an ugly word, crossed the room to unlatch the door, and stood with his ear at the opening. What ! a peer condescend to play eavesdropper, in an attitude that befits a mean man ? Yes : and a prince has done the same, when in bodily fear of duns.

A few minutes elapse. The indistinct sound of contention approaches his lordship's ear, in conjunction with a very uncomfortable stream of wind, and then the house door closes with a bang, the cab whirls off again, and the Earl rings the library bell.

"Jenkins, who was it ?"

"That impudent Salmon again, my lord. I said you were out, and he vowed you were in. I believe he would have pushed his way up here, but John and the porter stood by, and I daresay he thought we three should be a match for him."

"Insolent !" muttered his lordship. "Has Mr. Grubb been here ?"

"No, my lord."

"What can detain him ?" spoke the Earl to himself, irascibly. "I begged him to come to-day. Mind you are in the hall yourself, Jenkins ; you know whom to admit and whom not to admit."

"All right, my lord." And the butler, who had lived with the Earl many years, and was a confidential servant devoted to his master's interests, closed the library door, and descended.

It was not until evening that Mr. Grubb came, and was shown into the library. Do not be prejudiced against him on account of his name, reader, but pay attention to him, for he is worthy of it, and he plays a prominent part in this little history. He is thirty years of age, a tall, slender, noble-looking man, with intellect stamped on his ample forehead, and good feeling pervading his countenance. It is a very refined face, and its grey-blue eyes are simply beautiful. He is the son of that city merchant, Christopher Grubb, who married Catherine Grant. Christopher Grubb has been dead many years, and the son, Francis Charles Christopher, is the head of the house now, and the only one of the name living.

His acquaintanceship with Lord Acorn had commenced in this way. When that nobleman's only son, Viscount Denne, was at Christchurch, Francis Grubb was also there ; and they became as intimate as two undergraduates of totally opposite pursuits and tastes can become. Lord Denne was wild, careless, and extravagant ; more of a spendthrift (and that's saying a good deal) than his father had been before him. He got into debt and difficulty ; and Mr Grubb, with his

ample means, over and over again got him out of it. During their last term, when young Denne was in a maze of perplexity, and more deeply indebted to his friend than he cared to count, the accident happened which deprived him of life. A mad race with another Oxonian, each of them in his own stylish curricule, the fashionable bachelor carriage of the day, resulted in the overturning of both vehicles, and in the fatal injury of Lord Denne. During the three days that he lingered Mr. Grubb never left him. Lord Acorn was summoned from London, but Lady Acorn and her daughters were abroad. The young man told his father how much money he owed to Francis Grubb, begging that it might be repaid, and the Earl promised it should be. The death of this, his only son, was a terrible blow to him: he would have been nine-and-twenty this year.

For this happened some nine or ten years ago; and during all that time Mr. Grubb had not been repaid.

Repaid! The debt had been only added to. For the Earl had borrowed money on his own score, and increased it with a vengeance. He had borrowed upon the strength of some property that he was expecting yearly to fall to him through the death of an uncle: and Mr. Grubb, strictly honourable himself, had trusted to the Earl's promises. The property, however, had at length fallen in; had fallen in a year ago; and Mr. Grubb had not been repaid one shilling. While Lord Acorn was still saying to him, I shall have the money to-morrow, or, I shall have it the next day, Mr. Grubb found out that he had had it months before, and had used it in repaying more pressing creditors. Francis Grubb did not like it.

"Ah, Grubb, how are you?" cried Lord Acorn, grasping his hand cordially. "I thought you were never coming."

"It is foreign post night; I could not get away earlier," was Mr. Grubb's answer, his voice a singularly pleasant one.

"Look here, Grubb, I am hard up, cleared out down to the last gasp, and money I must have," began his lordship, as he paced the carpet restlessly. "I want you to advance me a little more."

"Not another farthing," spoke Mr. Grubb, in a decisive tone. "It has come to my knowledge, Lord Acorn, that you received the proceeds of your uncle's property long ago—and that you have spent them."

Remembering the deceit he had been practising, his lordship had the grace to feel ashamed of himself. His brow flushed.

"I could not help it, Grubb; I could not indeed. I did not like to tell you, and I have had the deuce's own trouble to keep my head above water."

"I am very sorry; very," said the merchant. "Had you dealt fairly and honourably with me, Lord Acorn, I would always have returned it in kind; always. Had you said to me, I have got that money at last, but I cannot let you have it, for it must go elsewhere, I should never have pressed you. I must press now."

"Rubbish!" cried the Earl, secure in the other's long-extended good

feeling. "You will do nothing of the kind, I know, Grubb. You have a good hold yet on the Netherleigh estate. That must come to me."

"Not so sure. Lord Acorn, I must have my money repaid."

"Then you can't have it. And I want you to let me have two thousand pounds more. As true as that we are living, Grubb, if I don't get that in the course of a few hours I shall be in Queer Street."

"Lord Acorn, I will not do it: and I will do the other. You should have dealt openly with me."

"Did you ever get blood from a stone?" asked the Earl: and the careless apathy of his manner contrasted strongly with the earnestness of Mr. Grubb's. "There's no chance of your getting the money back till I am under here," stamping his foot on the ground, "and you know it: unless the Netherleigh estate falls in. I speak freely to you, Grubb, presuming on our long friendship. Come, don't turn crusty at last. You don't want the money; you are as rich as Croesus, and you must wait. I wish my son had lived! we would have cut off the entail."

"The debt must be liquidated," returned Mr. Grubb, after a pause of regret, given to poor Lord Denne. And he spoke so coldly and determinedly that Lord Acorn wheeled sharply round in his walk, and looked at him.

"I don't know how the dickens it will be done, then. I suppose *you* won't proceed to harsh measures, and bring a hornet's nest about my head."

They faced one another, and a silence ensued. For once in his careless life, the good-looking face of Lord Acorn was troubled.

"There is one way in which your lordship can repay the debt," resumed Mr. Grubb. "And it will not cost you money."

"Ah!" laughed the Earl, "how's that? If you mean by post obit bonds, I'll sign a cart-load, if you like."

Mr. Grubb approached the Earl in a sort of nervous agitation. "Give me your youngest daughter, Lord Acorn," he breathed. "Let me woo and win her! I will take her in lieu of all."

His lordship was considerably startled; the proud Chenevix blood rose, and dyed his forehead crimson. He had not been listening particularly, and he doubted whether he heard aright. In one respect he had not, for he thought the words had been your *eldest* daughter. Against Francis Grubb personally, nothing could be said; but against his standing a great deal. Many years had gone by since Catherine Grant lost caste by marrying a "City man," but opinions had not changed, for it was yet long antecedent to these tolerant days. Men in trade, no matter how high the class of trade, were still kept at a distance by the upper orders—not looked upon as being of the same race.

Therefore the demand was like a blow to Lord Acorn: and he dared not resent it as he would have liked to. *His* daughter descend

from her own rank and become one with this trader ! Was the world coming to an end ?

But as the two men stood gazing at one another, neither of them speaking, the Earl began to revolve in his mind the pros of the matter, as well as the cons. Lady Grace was no longer young ; she was growing thin and rather cross, for she had been before the world ten years, with no result. *Would* it be so bad a match for her ?

"I will settle an ample income upon her," spoke Mr. Grubb. "And your unpaid bonds—there are many of them, my lord—I will return into your hands : all of them. Thus your debt to me will be cancelled, and, so far as I am concerned, you are a free man again."

"I cannot be that. I am at my wits' end now for two thousand pounds."

"You shall have that."

"Egad, Grubb's a generous fellow !" cogitated the Earl, "and it will be a famous thing for Grace : if she can only think so. Have you ever spoken to Grace of this," he asked, aloud.

"To Lady Grace ? No."

"Do you think Grace likes you ?" continued Lord Acorn, remembering how attractive a man the merchant was. "Do you think she will accept you ?"

"I am not speaking of Lady Grace."

"No !" repeated the Earl, opening his eyes wider than usual. "Which of them is it, then ?"

"Lady Adela."

If Lord Acorn had been startled when he thought the object of this proposal was Grace, he was considerably more startled now. Adela ! young, beautiful, and haughty—she would never have him. His first impulse was to indignantly reject the proposition ; his second thought was, that he was trammelled and *dared* not.

"I cannot force Adela's inclinations," he said, after an awkward pause.

"Neither would I take a wife whose inclinations require to be forced," returned Mr. Grubb. "Pray understand that."

"My lord," cried a servant, entering the library, "her ladyship wishes to know how much longer she is to wait dinner ?"

"Dinner !" exclaimed the Earl. "By Jove ! I did not know it was so late. Grubb, will you join us, sans ceremonie ?"

It was not the first time, by many, Mr. Grubb had dined there. He followed the Earl into the drawing-room. Lady Acorn was in it, a little woman, all fire and impatience ; especially just now, for if one thing put her out more than another, it was that of being kept waiting for her meals. The five daughters were there : they need not be described. Grace, little and plain, but nevertheless with a nice face, and eight-and-twenty, was the eldest ; Adela, whom you have already seen, and a very flower of beauty, was the youngest. Four daughters

were between them. Sarah, next to Grace, and one year younger; she had married Major Hope, and was in India; Mary, Harriet, and Frances; Adela coming last. Not a whit less beautiful was she than when we saw her a year ago at Court Netherleigh.

"Here's the grub again," whispered Harriet, for the girls were given to be flippant amongst themselves. Not that they disliked Mr. Grubb personally, or wished to cast derision on him, but they made a standing joke of his name. He was in trade—and all such people they had been taught to hold in contempt. The house "Christopher Grubb and Son" was situated somewhere in the City: it did business with India, and the colonies, and ever so many more places; though what the precise business was the young ladies did not pretend to understand; but they did know, or believed, that it was second to few in wealth, and that their father was a pretty considerable debtor to it. While liking Mr. Grubb personally very well indeed, they yet held him to be of a totally different order from themselves.

"Dinner at once," cried the Countess, impatiently, to the butler. "Of course it's all cold," she sharply added, for the especial benefit of her husband.

Mr. Grubb went to the upper end of the room after greeting the Countess, and was speaking with the young ladies there; Lord Acorn bent over the back of his wife's chair, and began to whisper to her.

"Betsy, here's the strangest thing! Grubb wants to marry one of the girls."

"Absurd!" responded the wrathful little woman.

"So it does appear, at the first blush. But when we come to look at the advantages—now do listen reasonably for a moment," he broke off, "you are as much interested in this as I am. He will settle hundreds of thousands upon her, and cancel all my debts to him besides."

"Did he say so?" quickly cried the Countess, putting off her anger to a less interested moment.

"He did," replied the Earl, forgetting that he had improvised the hundreds of thousands. "And in addition to putting me straight, he will give me a handsome sum down. You shall have five hundred pounds of it for that importunate milliner woman, Damereau, which will enable you all to get a new rig out," concluded the wily man, conscious that if his self-willed better-half set her temper against the match, the Archbishop of Canterbury himself could never tie it into one.

"Which of them does he want?" inquired the Countess, snappishly, as if wishing to intimate that, though she might have to say Yes, it should be done with an ill grace. "He's talking now with—which is it?—Mary."

"I thought it was Grace," began the Earl, in a deprecatory tone; "I took that for granted ——"

"Dinner, my lady," came the interruption, as the door was flung open : and the Earl started up, and said not another word. He thought it well that his lady-wife should digest the news so far, before proceeding further with it. The Countess, on her part, understood that all was told, and that the desired bride was Grace.

Mr. Grubb gave his arm to Lady Acorn, and sat down on her right hand. Lady Grace was next him on the other side. He was an agreeable man, of easy manners. Could they ignore the City house, and had he boasted of ancestry and a high-sounding name, they could not have wished for a companion who was more thoroughly the gentleman. Unusually agreeable he was this evening, for he now believed that no bar would be thrown in the way of his winning the Lady Adela. He had long admired her above all women ; he had long loved her, and he saw no reason why any bar should be thrown : what incompatibility ought to exist between the portionless daughter of a ruined peer and a British merchant of high character and standing, and next to unlimited wealth ? The ruined peer, however, had he heard this argument, might have said the merchant reasoned but in accordance with his merchant-origin ; that he could not be expected to understand distinctions which were above him.

Lady Acorn rose from table early. She had been making up her mind to the match, during dinner : like her husband, she discovered, on reflection, its numerous advantages, and she was impatient to disclose the matter to Grace. Mr. Grubb held the door open as they filed out, for which the Countess thanked him by a bow more cordial than she had ever bestowed on him in her life. Whether it had ever occurred to Lady Acorn that this City man was probably the son of Catherine Grant, cannot be told. She had never alluded to it : Catherine had offended them all too greatly ever to be recalled even by name : and, so far as Lord Acorn went, he did not know such a person as Catherine had ever existed.

The girls gathered their chairs round the fire in the autumn evening, and began grumbling. "Engagements"—he did not say of what nature—had been Lord Acorn's plea for remaining in town when everybody else had left it. Adela was especially bitter.

"Papa never does things like other people. When we ought to be away, we are boxed up in town ; and when everybody else is in town, we are kept in the country. I'm sick of it."

"It is a pity, girls, you have not got husbands to cater for you, as you are sick of your father's rule," tartly spoke their mother. "You don't go off ; any of you."

"It is Grace's turn to go first," cried Lady Harriet.

"Yes, it is—and one wedding in a family often leads to another," observed the wily Countess. "I should like to see Grace well settled. With a fine place of her own where we could go and visit her, and a nice town mansion ; and a splendid income to support it all."

"And a box at the Opera," suggested Frances.

"And a herd of deer, and a pack of hounds, and the crown diamonds," interrupted Adela, with irony in her tone, and a spice of scorn in her eye, as she glanced up from her book. "Don't you wish we had Aladdin's lamp? It might come to pass then."

"But if I tell you that it will come to pass without it," said Lady Acorn, "that it *has* come to pass, what should you say? Look up, Grace, my dear; there's luck in store for you yet."

Their mother's manner was so pointedly significant, that all were silent from amazement. The colour mounted to the cheeks of Grace, and her lips parted: could it be that she was no longer to remain Lady Grace *Chenevix*?

"Grace, child," continued the Countess, "the time is gone by for you to pick and choose. You are now getting on for thirty, and have never had the ghost of a chance——"

"That is more than you ought to assert, mamma," interrupted Grace, her face flushing, perhaps at her mother's assertion telling home. "I may have had—I *did* have a chance, as you call it, but——"

"Well, not that we ever knew of; let us amend the sentence in that way, Grace. What I was going to observe is, that you must not be over particular now."

"*Has* Grace got an offer?" inquired Harriet, breathlessly.

"Yes, she has, and you need not all look so incredulous. It is a good offer too, plenty of substance about it. She will abound in such wealth that she'll be the envy of all the girls in London, and of you four in particular. She will have her town and country mansions, crowds of servants, dresses at will—everything, in short, that money can purchase." For, in her maternal anxiety for the acceptance of the offer, her ladyship thought she could not make too much of its advantages.

"Why, for all that, Grace would marry a chimney-sweep," laughed the plain-speaking Lady Frances.

"Grace has had it in her head to turn serious," added Harriet; "she may put that off now. I think Aladdin's lamp has been at work."

"Of course there are some disadvantages attending the proposed match," said Lady Acorn, with deprecation; "no marriage is without them, I can tell you that. Grace will have every real and substantial good; but the gentleman, in birth and position, is—rather—obscure. But he is not a chimney-sweep: it's not so bad as that."

"Good Heavens, mamma!" interrupted Lady Grace; "'so bad as that.'"

"Pray do not make any further mystery, mamma," said Mary. "Who is it that has fallen in love with Grace?"

"Mr. Grubb."

"Mr.—Grubb!" was echoed by the young ladies in every variety of astonishment, and Grace thought that of all men in the

world she should have guessed him last, but she did not say so. She was of a cautious nature, and rarely spoke on impulse.

The silence of surprise was broken by a ringing laugh from Adela, one laugh following upon another. It seemed as though she could not cease. When had they seen Adela so merry?

"I cannot help it," she said apologetically, "but it did strike me as sounding so absurd. 'Lady Grace Grubb!' Forgive me, Gracie."

"It will not bear so aristocratic a sound as Lady Grace Chenevix," retorted the mother, tartly, "but remember the old saying, 'What's in a name?' It is you who are absurd, Adela."

CHAPTER V.

LADY ADELA.

"I HAVE opened the matter to Grace, and there'll be no trouble with her," began Lady Acorn to her husband the next morning, halting to say it as she was going into her dressing-room. "No girl knows better than she on which side her bread is buttered?"

"To Grace!" cried the Earl, who was only half awake and spoke from the bedclothes. "Do you mean about Grubb?"

"Now what else should I mean?"

"But it is not Grace he wants. It's Adela."

"Adela," echoed Lady Acorn, aghast.

"I don't think he'd have Grace at a gift—or any of them but Adela. And so you told *her*, making her dream of wedding-rings and orange-blossoms! Poor Gracie, what a sell!"

"Adela will never have him," broke forth the Countess, in high vexation, at herself, her husband, Mr. Grubb, and all the world. "Never."

"Oh, nonsense, she must be talked into it. With five girls it's something to get off one."

"Adela is not a girl to be 'talked into' anything. She'd like a duke. She is the vainest of them all."

"Look at the amount of devilry this will patch up," urged the Earl, impressively, as he lifted his head from the pillow. "If he does not get Adela, he is going to sue for his over-due bonds."

"You have no business with bonds, over-due or under-due," snapped his wife. "I declare I have nothing but worry in this life."

"I shall get the two thousand pounds from him, if this comes off; you shall have five hundred of it, as I told you; and my debt to him he will cancel. The man's mad after Adela."

"But she's not mad after him," retorted Lady Acorn.

"Make her so," advised the Earl. And her ladyship went forth to her dressing-room, and allowed some of her superfluous temper to explode on her unoffending maid, who stood there waiting for her.

"There, that will do," she impatiently said, when only half dressed, "I'll finish for myself. Go and send Lady Grace to me:" and the maid went, gladly enough.

"Gracie, my dear," she began, when her daughter entered, "I am so sorry; so vexed; but it was your papa's fault. He should have been more explicit."

"Vexed at what?" asked Grace.

"That which I told you last night—I am so grieved, poor child!—it turns out to have been some horrible mistake."

Grace compressed her lips. "Yes, mamma?"

"A mistake in the name. It is Adela Mr. Grubb proposed for—not you. I am deeply grieved, Grace."

Lady Grace laid one hand across her chest: it may be that her heart was beating unpleasantly with the disappointment. Better, certainly, that her hopes had never been raised, than that they should be dashed thus unceremoniously down again. She had learnt to appreciate Mr. Grubb as he deserved; she liked and esteemed him, and would gladly have married him.

"Will Adela accept him?" were the first words she said. For she did not forget that Adela, by way of amusing herself, had not been sparing of her ridicule, the previous night, of Mr. Grubb and his pretensions.

"I don't know," growled Lady Acorn. "Adela, when she chooses, can be the very essence of obstinacy. I have said nothing to her. It is only now I found out there was a misapprehension."

"Mother!" suddenly exclaimed Grace, "it has placed me in a painfully ridiculous position, there's no denying that: we have been talking of it amidst ourselves. If you will help me, it may be made less so."

"How?"

"Say that I was in your confidence; that we both knew it was Adela; and that what was said about me was arranged between us to break the matter to her, and get her reconciled to the idea of *him*. And let it be myself, not you, to explain now to Adela."

"Yes, yes; do as you will," eagerly assented the mother: for she did feel sorry for Grace.

Grace went to Adela's room, and found her there, with Harriet. She had been recalling the past: and she saw now how attentive Francis Grubb had been to Adela; how fond of talking with her. "Had our eyes been open, we might have seen it all," sighed Grace.

"How nicely you were all taken in last night!" she said, assuming a light playfulness, as she sat down at the open window. "Don't you think mamma and I got up that fable well about Mr. Grubb?"

"Got it up!" cried Harriet. "You hypocritical sinners! Did he not make the offer?"

"Ay, but not for me. It was better to put it so, don't you see, by way of breaking it to you."

"Then you are not going to be Lady Grace Grubb, after all!" said Adela. "Well, it would have been an incongruous assimilation of names."

"I am not. Guess who it is he wants, Adela?"

"Frances?" cried out Harriet.

"No, but you are very near—you burn, as we children used to say at our play."

"Not Adela!"

"It is," answered Grace. "And I congratulate her heartily. Lady Adela Grubb will sound better than Lady Grace would."

"Thank you," satirically answered Adela; "you may retain the name yourself, Grace. None of your grubs for me."

"Ah, don't be silly, child. A grub, indeed! He is one of the best and most admirable of men; a true nobleman."

The words were interrupted by a laugh from Harriet; a ringing laugh. "Oh, Gracie, how unfortunate! What shall we do! Frances wrote last night to tell Miss Upton of your engagement, and the letter's posted."

Grace Chenevix suppressed her mortification, and quitted her sisters with a smiling face. But when she was safe in her own room, she burst into a flood of distressing tears.

Lord and Lady Acorn chose to breakfast that morning alone in the library. Afterwards Adela was sent for. Straightening down the slim waist of her pretty morning dress with an action that spoke of conscious vanity, she obeyed the summons. Lord Acorn threw aside the morning paper when she entered.

"Adela, sit down," he said, pushing the chair at his elbow slightly forward. "We have received an offer of marriage for you; and, though it is not in every respect all we could wish——"

"From the grub," interrupted Adela, merging ceremony in indignation, as she stood confronting both her parents, regardless of the seat proffered. "Grace has been telling me."

"Hush, Adela! don't give way to flippant folly," interposed her mother. "Have you considered the advantages of such an alliance as this?"

"Advantages, mamma! I don't understand. Have you"—turning to her father—"considered the disadvantages, sir?"

"There is only one disadvantage connected with it, Adela—that he is not of noble birth."

"But that is insuperable, papa!"

"Indeed, no," said Lord Acorn. "You will possess every good that wealth can command; all things that can conduce to happiness. Your position will be an enviable one. How many of the daughters of our order—in more favourable circumstances than yours—have married these merchant-princes!"

Adela pouted. "That is no reason why I should, papa. I don't want to marry."

"You might all remain unmarried for ever, and make five old maids of yourselves, and buy cats and monkeys to pet, if it were not for the horrible dilemma we are in," screamed the Countess, in her well-known fiery tone, and with a wrathful glance at the Earl: for her tones always were fiery and her glances wrathful when his unpardonable recklessness was recalled to her mind. "Mr. Grubb has been, so to say, the salvation of us for years—for years, Adela—every year has brought its embarrassments, and he has helped us out of them. As well tell her the truth at once, Lord Acorn," she concluded sharply.

"Ugh!" grunted he, in what might be taken for a note of unwilling assent.

"And if we put this affront upon him—refuse him your hand, which he solicits with so much honour and liberality—it will be all over with us. We can't live any longer in England, for there's nothing left to live upon; we must go abroad to some wretched hole of a continental place, and lodge on one dirty floor of six rooms, and live as common people. What chance would there be of your picking up even a merchant then?"

Adela rose, smiling incredulously. "Things cannot be as bad as that, mamma."

"Sit down, Adela," cried her father, peremptorily, raising his hand to check the flow of eloquence his wife was again about to enter upon. "It *is* as bad. Grubb has behaved like a prince to me, and nothing less. And, if he should recal the money he has lent, I know not, in truth, where any of us would be. I should have to run; and be posted up as a defaulter, into the bargain, all over the kingdom." And, in a few brief words, he explained facts to her; making, of course, the worst of them. The obstinacy on Adela's countenance faded away as she listened: she was deeply attached to her father.

"You will be a very princess if you take him, Adela," said Lady Acorn. "Ah! I can tell you, child, before you have come to my age you will have found out that there's little worth living for but wealth, which brings ease and comfort. I ought to know; for our want of it, through one absurd extravagance or another"—with a dreadful glance at her lord—"has been the worry and bane of my married life."

"You have been extravagant on your own score," growled he.

"But, papa, I don't care for Mr. Grubb. Apart from the disreputable fact that he is a tradesman ——"

"Those merchant-princes cannot be called tradesmen, Adela," quickly interposed Lord Acorn, who could put the case strongly, in spite of his prejudices, when it suited his interest.

"Well, apart from that, I say I do not like him."

"You cannot *dislike* him. Nobody can dislike Francis Grubb."

"I shall if I am made to marry him."

Her obstinate mood was returning; they saw that, and they let her escape for the time. Adela, the youngest and most beautiful

of all their children, had been reprehensibly indulged : allowed to grow up in the belief that the world was made for her.

"Well, Adela, and how have you sped?" asked Grace.

"Oh, I don't know," was Adela's answer, as she flung herself into a low chair by her dressing-table. "Mamma is so fond of telling us that the world's full of trouble; and I think it is."

"Have you consented?"

"No. And I don't intend to consent."

"But why not? He is very nice, very; and the advantages are very great. Tell me why you will not, Adela—*dear* Adela?"

Adela turned her head away. "I do not care to marry yet; him, or any other man."

A light—or rather a doubt—seemed to break upon Lady Grace. "Adela," she whispered, "it is not possible you are still thinking of Captain Stanley?"

"Where would be the use of that?" was the answer. "He is fighting in India, and I am here: little chance of our paths in life ever again crossing each other."

"If I really thought your head was still running upon Stanley, I would tell you ——"

"What?" for Grace had stopped.

"The truth," was the reply, in a low voice. "News of him reached England by the last mail."

"What news?"

"Well, I—I hardly know whether you will care much to hear it."

"Probably not. I should like to, for all that."

"He is married."

Adela looked up with a start, and her colour faded. "Married?"

"He is. He has married his cousin, a Miss Stanley, and it is said they have long been attached to each other. He was a frightful flirt; but he had no heart; I always said it; and I think he was not a good man in other respects."

The news brought a pang of mortification to Adela; perhaps a deeper pang than that. Some eighteen months back, she saw a good deal of this Captain Stanley; it was thought by shrewd observers that she had lost her heart to him. If so, it was now thrown back upon her.

And, whether it might have been this, or whether it was the persistent persuading of her father and mother, Adela Chenevix consented to accept Mr. Grubb. But she bitterly resented the necessity, and from that hour she deliberately steeled her heart against him.

Daintily she swept into the room for her first interview with him. He stood in agitation at its upper end—a fine intellectual man, one, young though he was, to be venerated and loved. She wore a pink-and-white silk dress, and her hair had pink and white roses in it; for Mr. Grubb had come to dinner, and she was already dressed for it. A rich colour shone in her cheeks, her beautiful eyes and features

were lighted up with it, and her rather tall, delicate figure was thrown back—in disdain. Oh, that he could have read it then!

He never afterwards quite remembered what he said when he approached her. He knew he took her hand. And he believed he whispered words of thanks.

"They are not due to me," was her answer, delivered with cold equanimity. "My father tells me I must marry you, and I accede to it."

"May God enable me to reward you for the confidence you repose in me!" he whispered. "If it be given to man to love a wife as one never yet was loved, may it be given to me!"

She twisted her hand from him with an ungracious movement, for he would have retained it, and walked deliberately across the room, leaving him where he stood, and rang the bell.

"Tell mamma Mr. Grubb is here," she said to the servant.

He felt pained: he understood this had been an accorded interview. Like all other lovers, he began to speak of the future—of his hope that she would learn to love him.

"There should be no misunderstanding between us on this point," she hastily answered; and could it be that there was *contempt* in her tone? "I have agreed to be your wife; but, until a day or two ago, the possibility of my becoming so had never been suggested to me. Therefore, the love that I suppose ought to accompany this kind of contract is not mine to offer."

How wondrously calm she spoke—in so matter-of-fact, business-like a way! It struck even him, infatuated though he was.

"It may come in time," he whispered. "My love shall call forth yours; my ——"

"I hear mamma," interrupted Adela, drawing away from him, like a second cruel Barbara Allen.

"Adela, where's your town house to be?" began one of the girls to her when they got into the drawing-room after dinner, the Earl and Mr. Grubb being still at table. "Not in the smoky City, surely!"

"His house is not in the City; it's in Russell Square," corrected another. "Of course he won't take her *there*!"

"Ada, mind which opera-box you secure. Let it hold us all."

"Of course you'll be smothered in diamonds," suggested Lady Mary.

"One good thing will come of this wedding, if nothing else does: mamma must get us new things, and plenty of them."

"I wonder whether he will give us any ornaments? He is generous to a fault. Is he not, Adela?"

"How you tease!" was Adela's languid rejoinder. "Go and ask him."

"I protest, Adela, if you show yourself so supremely indifferent, he will declare off before the wedding-day."

"And take up with one of you? I wish he would."

"No fear. Ada's chains are bound about him fast. One may see how he loves her."

"Love!" cried Adela. "It is perfectly absurd—from him to me. But it is the way with those plebeians."

The preparations for the wedding were begun. On so magnificent a scale that the fashionable world of London was ringing with them. The bridegroom's liberality, in all that concerned his future wife, could not be surpassed. Settlements, houses, carriages, horses, furniture, ornaments, jewellery, all were perfect of their kind, leaving nothing to be wished for. The Lady Adela had once spoken of Aladdin's lamp, in reference to her sister Grace's ideal union: looking on these real preparations, one might imagine that some magic, equally powerful, was at work now.

Lord Acorn had a place in Oxfordshire, and the family went to it in October. Mr. Grubb paid it one or two short visits, and went down for Christmas, staying then ten days. They were all cordial with him, save Adela; she continued to be supremely indifferent. He won upon their regard strangely: the girls could do nothing but sing his praises. Poor unselfish Grace once caught herself wishing that that early misapprehension had not been one, and then took herself to task severely. She loved Adela, and was glad for her sake.

But Adela was not quite always cold and haughty. As if to show her affianced husband that such was not her true nature, she would now and again be sweetly winning and gentle. On one of these occasions he caught her hand. They were sitting on a sofa; Frances had run into the next room for a book they were discussing.

"Adela," he whispered passionately, taking both her hands in his, "but for these rare moments, I should be in despair."

She did not, for a wonder, resent the words. She glanced up at him, a shy look in her sweet brown eyes, a smile on her parted lips, a deeper rose-blush on her delicate face. He stooped and kissed her; kissed her fervently.

She resented that. For when Frances, coming back on the instant, entered, she met Adela sweeping from the room in a storm of anger.

Not to let him kiss her! And in six weeks' time she was to be his wife!

Mr. Grubb had an adventure on the journey home. They had passed Reading some minutes when the train was stopped. A down-train had come to grief through the breaking of an axle, throwing a carriage, fortunately empty, right across the line; which in consequence was temporarily blocked up. The passengers of the down-train, very few of them, were standing about; the passengers of the up-train got out also.

"Can I be of any use?—can I do anything for you?" asked Mr. Grubb, addressing a little lady in a black-silk cloak and close bonnet, who was sitting on a box and looking rather helpless. And, though he had heard tell of Miss Margery Upton, he was not aware that it was she to whom he was speaking.

"It is good of you to enquire, sir; you are the first that has done it," she answered, "but I don't see that there's anything to be done.

We might all have been killed. They should keep their material in safer order."

She looked up as she spoke. Some drops of rain were beginning to fall. Mr. Grubb put up his umbrella, and held it over her. To do this, he laid down a small hand-bag of Russia leather, on the silver clasp of which was engraved "C. Grubb." Miss Upton read the name, rose from her box, and looked him steadily in the face. "It is a good face and a handsome one," she thought to herself.

"Sir, is your name Grubb?" she asked.

"Yes, madam, it is."

"I read it here," she explained, pointing to the old-fashioned article.

"Ah yes," he smiled. "It was my late father's bag, and that was his name."

"Was he Christopher Grubb?"

"He was."

She put her hand on his coat-sleeve, apparently for the purpose of steadying herself while regarding his face more attentively.

"You have your mother's eyes," she said. "I should know them anywhere. Beautiful eyes they were. And so are yours."

"And may I enquire who it is that is doing honour to my vanity in saying this?" he rejoined, in the winning voice and manner characteristic of him.

"Ay, if you like. I daresay you have heard of me. I am Margery Upton."

"Indeed I have; and I have wondered sometimes whether I should ever see you. Then——did you know my mother, Miss Upton?"

"I did; in the old days when we were girls together. Has she never told you so?"

"Not to my recollection."

"I see. Resented our resentment, and dropped us out of her life as we dropped her," commented Miss Upton partly to herself, as she sat down again. "What a tinkering they keep up there! Is your mother living?"

"Yes; but she is a great invalid."

"Is it you who are about to marry Lord Acorn's daughter?" continued Miss Upton.

"Yes. I have just come from them."

"I knew the name was Grubb, and that he was a City man and wealthy," she candidly continued; "and the thought occurred to me that it might possibly be the son of the Christopher Grubb I heard something of in early life. I did not put the question to the Acorns."

"It is by them I have heard you spoken of," he remarked. "Also by my sister."

"By your sister!" exclaimed Miss Upton in surprise. "What sister? What does she know of me?"

"She was staying some fourteen or fifteen months ago with the Dalrymples of Moat Grange—it was at the time of Mr. Dalrymple's

sad death—and she made your acquaintance there. She is Mary Lynn, my half-sister. My father died when I was a little lad, and my mother made a second marriage."

Miss Upton was silent, apparently revolving matters in her mind. "Did your sister know that I was her mother's early friend?" she asked.

"Oh no, I think not. She only spoke of you as a stranger—or, rather, as a friend of the Dalrymples. I never heard my mother speak of you at all—I do not suppose Mary has."

"That young girl had her mother's eyes," suddenly cried Miss Upton, "just as you have. They seemed familiar to me; I remember that; but I wanted the clue, which this name"—bending down to look at the bag—"has supplied. C. Grubb? Christopher was your father's name."

"It is mine also."

"And Francis too?" she quickly cried.

"And Francis too—Francis Charles Christopher." It crossed his mind to wonder how she knew it was Francis, then remembered it must have been from the Acorns. Miss Upton had lifted her face and was looking at him.

"Why did your mother name you Francis?" she asked, rather sharply.

"I was named Francis after my father's only brother. He stood to me as godfather, and gave me his name—Francis Charles." And left me his money also, Mr. Grubb might have added, but did not.

"I see," nodded Miss Upton, apparently satisfied. "You have been letting Lord Acorn borrow no end of money of you on the strength of his coming into the Netherleigh estate," she resumed, in her matter-of-fact, open way, that spoke so much of candour.

Mr. Grubb hesitated, and his face slightly flushed. It did not seem right to enter upon Lord Acorn's affairs with a stranger. But she seemed to know all about it, and was waiting for his answer.

"Not on the Netherleigh estate," he answered. "I have always told Lord Acorn that he ought not to make sure of that."

"You would be quite safe in lending it," she nodded, a peculiar look of acuteness, which Mr. Grubb did not altogether fathom, on her face. "Quite."

Some stir interrupted further conversation. The tinkering, as Miss Upton called it, had ceased, and the down line was at length ready for traffic. "Where are my people, I wonder?" cried Miss Upton, rising and looking around.

They came forward almost as she spoke—a man and a maid servant. The former took up the box she had been sitting on, and Mr. Grubb gave her his arm to the train, and put her into the carriage.

"This is the first time I have seen you, but I hope it will not be the last," she said, retaining his hand in hers when she had shaken it.

"I am now on my way to Cheltenham, to spend a month, perhaps two months. I like the place, and go to it nearly every year. When I return you must come to Court Netherleigh."

"I shall be very much pleased to do so."

Mr. Grubb had left her, and was waiting to see the train go on, when she made a hasty movement to him with her hand.

"Perhaps I was incautious in saying that you were safe in lending money on the Netherleigh property," she whispered in his ear. "Take care you don't breathe a word of that admission to Acorn. He would want to borrow you out of house and home."

Mr. Grubb smiled. "I will take care; you may rely on me, Miss Upton." And he stood back and lifted his hat as the delayed train puffed on.

And it may be well to give a word of explanation while Mr. Grubb is waiting for *his* delayed train, which is not ready to puff on yet.

The house "Christopher Grubb and Son," situated in Leadenhall Street, was second in importance to few in the city; I had almost said second to none. It had been founded by the old man, Christopher Grubb, father of the Christopher who had married Catherine Grant, and grandfather of the Francis who is waiting for his train. The two Christophers, father and son, died about the same time, and the business was carried on by old Christopher's other son, Francis. Catherine Grubb, nee Grant, was left largely endowed, provided she did not marry again. If she did, a comparatively small portion only would remain hers, and at her disposal—about a thousand pounds a-year; the rest would go at once to her little son, of whom she would also forfeit the personal guardianship. Mrs. Grubb did marry again; and the little lad, aged eight, was transferred to the care of his uncle Francis, in accordance with the terms of the will, and to his uncle's house in Russell Square. But Mr. Francis Grubb was no churlish guardian, and the child was allowed to be very often at Blackheath with his mother. Mrs. Grubb's second husband, Richard Lynn, who was a barrister, not often troubled with briefs, did not live long; and she was again left a widow with her little girl, Mary Isabel. She continued in the house at Blackheath, which was her own, and she was in it still.

Upon quitting Oxford, where he took a degree, Francis entered the house in Leadenhall Street, becoming at once its head and chief. He showed good aptitude for business, was attentive, steady, punctual; above all, he did not despise it. When he had been in it three or four years, his uncle—with whom he continued to reside in Russell Square—found his health failing. Seeing what must shortly occur, he recommended his nephew to take a partner—one James Howard, a methodical, middle-aged, honourable man, who had been in the house since old Christopher's time. This was carried out; and the firm became Grubb and Howard. The next event was the death of the uncle, Francis Grubb. He bequeathed five thousand pounds to

Mary Lynn, and the whole of his large accumulated fortune, save that, to his nephew, Francis the younger, including the house in Russell Square. Francis had continued to reside in the house since, until the present time.

He was quitting it now—transferring it over to Mr. Howard ; who had taken a fancy to leave his place at Richmond and live in London. Of course, a house in Russell Square would not suit the aspiring tastes of Lady Adela Chenevix, and Francis Grubb had been fortunate enough to secure and purchase the lease of one within the aristocratic regions of Grosvenor Square.

The wedding took place in February. Miss Upton did not attend it, though pressed very much by the Acorn family to do so. She was still at Cheltenham, not feeling very well, she told them, not sufficiently so to come up ; but she sent Adela a cheque for two hundred pounds—which no doubt atoned for her absence.

The bride and bridegroom took their departure for Dover en route for Rome : Lady Adela having condescended to express a wish to visit the Eternal City.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL DOWN-HILL.

THE hot rays of the June sun lay on the west-end streets one Thursday at midday, and on three men of fashion who were strolling through them arm-in-arm. He who walked in the middle was a young man turned six-and-twenty, but not looking it ; a good-natured, easy-going, attractive young fellow, who won his way with everybody. It was Robert Dalrymple. From two to three years had elapsed since his father's death ; and, alas, they had not been made years of wisdom to him. Impulsive, generous, hasty, improvident, and very fond of London life, Robert Dalrymple had been an easy prey to Satan's myrmidons in the shape of designing men.

These two gentlemen, with him to-day, were not precisely genii of good. One of them, Colonel Haughton, was a stout, elderly man, with a burly manner, and a mass of iron-grey hair adorning his big head ; his black eyes stood out, bold and hard, through his gold-rimmed glasses. Mr. Piggott, much younger, was little and thin, with a stoop in the shoulders, and one of the craftiest countenances ever seen, to those who could read it. Suddenly Robert stood still, withdrew his arm from Mr. Piggott's and gazed across the street.

"What now, Dalrymple ?"

"There's my Cousin Oscar ! If ever I saw him in my life, that is he. What brings him in town ? I will wish you good day and be after him."

"To meet to-night," quickly cried Lord Haughton.

"To meet to-night, of course. No fear of my not coming for my revenge. Adieu to both of you until then."

It is a sad story that you have to hear of Robert Dalrymple. How shall I tell it? And yet, while running into this pitfall, and tumbling into that, the young man's intentions were so good and himself so sanguine that one's heart ached for him.

In his chivalrous care for his mother, the first thing Robert did, on coming home from his father's funeral, was to break off the engagement with Mary Lynn. Or, rather, to postpone it—if you can understand such a thing. "We shall not be able to marry for many a year, Mary," he said, the tears that had fallen during the burial service still glistening in his eyes, "and so you had better take back your troth. Moat Grange is no longer mine, for I cannot and will not turn my mother and sisters out of it; I promised *him* I would not: and so—and so—there's nothing to be done but part."

In the grey gloaming that same evening they went out under the canopy of heaven and talked the matter over calmly. Neither of them wanted to part from the other: but they saw not any way at present of escaping it. Robert had property of his own that brought him two hundred a-year; Mary had the five thousand pounds left her by Mr. Francis Grubb. Mary would have risked it, though she did not say so; Robert never glanced at the possibility. Super exalted ideas blind us to the common view of every day life, and Robert could only look at housekeeping in the style of Moat Grange. It occurred to Mary that perhaps his mother and her mother might spare them something yearly, but again she did not like it to be herself to suggest it. So the open agreement come to between them was, to cancel the engagement; the tacit one was to *wait*—and that they were just as much plighted to each other as ever.

But the reader must fully understand Robert Dalrymple's position. He had come into Moat Grange as surely and practically as though he had had no mother in existence. Its revenues were his; his to do what he pleased with. It is true that the keeping up of Moat Grange, as his father had kept it up, would take nearly all those revenues: and Robert had to learn that yet, in something beyond theory. Mrs. Dalrymple instituted various curtailments, but her son in his generosity thought they were unnecessary.

Close upon his father's death, Robert came to London, attended by Reuben, and entered upon some rather luxurious chambers in South Audley Street. The rooms, and the expenses of fashionable living, made havoc of his purse, and speedily plunged him into embarrassment. It might not have been serious embarrassment, this alone, for he of course took to himself a certain portion of his rents; but unfortunately some of the acquaintances he made introduced him to that most dangerous vice, gambling; and they did not rest until they had imbued him with a love of it. It is of no use to pursue the course of his downfall. He had been gradually getting lower and lower since then in regard to finances, and deeper into embarrassment: and in this, the third season, Robert Dalrymple had hardly a guinea

he could call his own; and Moat Grange was mortgaged. He was open-hearted, generous as of old. Ah, if he could only have been as free from care!

Dodging in and out amid the vehicles that crowded Regent Street, Robert got over at last, and tore after his cousin. "Oscar, Oscar! is it you?" he called out. "When did you get here?"

"Ah, Robert, how are you? I was on my way to South Audley Street to find you."

"Come for a long stay?" demanded Robert, as he linked his arm within Oscar's.

"I came to-day and I return to-morrow," replied Oscar.

"You don't mean that, man! Visit London in the height of the season, and stay but a day! Such a calamity was never heard of."

"I cannot afford London in the season; my purse is not long enough."

"You shall stay with me. But what did you come for?"

"A small matter of business brought me," replied Oscar, "and I have to go down to-morrow—thank you all the same."

He did not say what the business was; he did not choose to say. Mrs. Dalrymple, still living at the Grange, had been tormented by doubts, touching her son, for some time past. Recently she had heard rumours that rendered her doubly uneasy, and she had begged of Oscar to come up and find out whether there were any, or how much, ground for them. If things were as bad as Mrs. Dalrymple feared, Oscar concluded that from Robert he should hear nothing. He meant to put a question or two to him, to make his observations silently, and, if necessary, to question Reuben. They were of totally opposite natures, these two young men: Oscar was all cool calculation, and the senior by half a dozen years; Robert all thoughtless impulse.

Oscar put his question or two to Robert in the course of the afternoon; but Robert simply waived the subject off, laughing in Oscar's face the while. And from the observations Oscar made in South Audley Street, nothing could be gathered: the rooms were quiet.

They dined there in the evening, Reuben waiting on them. Robert urged various outdoor attractions on Oscar afterwards, but he urged them in vain: Oscar preferred to remain at home. So they sipped their wine, and talked. At eleven o'clock Oscar rose to leave.

"It is time for sober people to be in bed, Robert. I hope I have not kept you up."

Robert Dalrymple fairly exploded with laughter. Kept him up! at only eleven o'clock! "My evening is not begun yet," said he.

"No!" returned Oscar, looking surprised, whether he felt so or not. "What do you mean?"

"I am engaged for the evening to Colonel Haughton."

"It sounds a curious time to us quiet country people to begin an evening. What are you going to do at Colonel Haughton's?"

"Can't tell till I get there."

"Can I accompany you?"

Robert's face turned grave. "No," said he, "it is a liberty I may not take. Colonel Haughton is a peculiar-tempered man."

"Good night."

"Good night, Oscar. Come to breakfast with me at ten."

Oscar Dalrymple departed. But he did not proceed to the hotel, where he had engaged a bed: on the contrary, he took up his station in a shady nook, whence he could see the door he had just come out of; and there he waited patiently. Presently he saw Robert Dalrymple emerge from it, and betake himself away.

A little while yet waited Oscar, and then he retraced his steps to the house, and rang the bell. Reuben answered it. A faithful servant, getting in years now. Robert was the third of the family he had served.

"Reuben, I may have left my note-case in the dining-room," said Oscar. "Can I look for it?"

The note-case was looked for without success: and Oscar discovered that it was safe in his pocket. Perhaps he knew that all the while.

"I am sorry to have troubled you for nothing, Reuben. Did I call you out of your bed?"

"No, no," answered the man, shaking his head. "There's rarely much bed for me before daylight, Mr. Oscar."

"How is that?"

"I suppose young men must be young men, sir. I should not mind that; but Mr. Robert is getting into just the habits of his uncle."

Oscar looked up quickly. "His uncle—Claude Dalrymple?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Ay, he is, sir: and my heart is almost mad at times with fear. If my dear late master was alive, I should just go down to the Grange and tell him everything."

An idea floated into the mind of Oscar as he listened. Mrs. Dalrymple had not mentioned whence she had heard the rumours of Robert's doings: he now thought it might have been from no other than Reuben. This enabled him to speak out.

"Reuben," he said, "I came up to-day at Mrs. Dalrymple's request. She is terribly uneasy about her son. Tell me all, for I have to report it at the Grange. If what we fear be true, something must be done to save him."

"It is all true, sir, and I wrote to warn my mistress," cried Reuben. "Should things ever come to a crisis with him, as they did with his uncle, I knew Mrs. Dalrymple would blame me bitterly for not having spoken. And I should blame myself."

Oscar Dalrymple gazed at Reuben, for the man's words had struck ominously on his ear. "Do you fancy—do you fear—things may come to a crisis with him, as they did with his uncle?" he breathed in a low tone.

"Not in the same way, sir ; not as to *himself*," returned the man in agitation. "Mr. Oscar, how could you think it?"

"Nay, Reuben, *I* think it! Your words alone led to the thought."

"I meant as to his money, sir. He has fallen into a bad gambling set, just as Mr. Claude fell. One of them is the very same man: Colonel Haughton. He ruined Mr. Claude, and he is ruining Mr. Robert. He was Captain Haughton then ; he is a colonel now, but he has sold out of the army long ago. He lives by gambling. I have told Mr. Robert so, but he does not believe me."

"That's where he is gone to-night."

"Where he goes every night, Mr. Oscar. Haughton and those men have lured him into their toils, and he can't escape them. He has not the moral courage ; and he has the mania for play upon him. He comes home towards morning, flushed and haggard, sometimes in drink—yes, sir ; drinking and gaming mostly go together. He appeared laughing and careless before you, but it was all put on."

"Have you warned him—or tried to stop him?"

"Yes, sir, once or twice ; but it does no good. I don't like to say too much : he might not take it from me. Those harpies won't let him rest ; they come hunting after him, just as they hunted his uncle a score, or more, years ago. Nobody ever had a better heart than Mr. Robert ; but he is pliable, and gets led away."

Oscar frowned. He thought Robert had no business to be "led away," and he felt little tolerance for him. Reuben had told all he knew, and Oscar wished him good night and departed, full of painful thought touching Robert.

The night passed. In the morning Oscar went to South Audley Street to breakfast. Robert was looking ill and anxious.

"Been making a night of it?" said Oscar, lightly. "You look as though you had."

"Yes, I was late. Pour out the coffee, will you, Oscar?"

His own hands were shaking. Oscar saw it as Robert opened his letters. One of them bore the Netherleigh post mark, and was from Farmer Lee. Oscar hardly knew how to open the ball, or what to say for the best.

"I'm sure something is disturbing you, Robert. You have had no sleep ; that's easy to be seen. What pursuit can you have, that it should keep you up all night?"

"One is never at a loss to kill time in London."

"I suppose not, if it has to be killed. But I did not know it was necessary to kill that which ought to be spent in sleep. One would think you passed your nights at the gaming-table, Robert."

The words startled him, and a flush rose to his pallid features. Oscar was gazing at him steadily.

"Robert, you look conscious. Have you learnt to gamble?"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Robert, confusedly. "I may play a little now and then."

"Do not shirk the question. *Have you taken to play?*"

"A little, I tell you. Never mind. It's my own affair."

"You were playing last night?"

"Well—yes, I was. Very little."

"Lose or win?" asked Oscar, carelessly.

"Oh, I lost," answered Robert. "The luck was against me."

"Now, my good fellow, do you know what you had best do? Go home to Moat Grange, and get out of this set: I know what gamesters are; they never let a pigeon off till he is stripped of his last feather. Leave with me for the Grange to-day, and cheat them; and stop there until the mania for play shall have left you, though it should be years to come."

Ah, how heartily Robert Dalrymple wished in his heart that he could do it!—that he could break through the net in which he was involved, in more ways than one! "I cannot go to Moat Grange," he answered.

"Your reason?"

"Because I must stay where I am. I wish I had never come—never set up these chambers, I do wish that. But, as I did, here I am fixed."

"I cannot think why you did come—flying from your home as soon as your father was under ground. Had you succeeded to twenty thousand a year, you could but have made hot haste to launch out in the metropolis."

"I did not come to launch out," returned Robert, angrily. "I came to get rid of myself. It was so wretched down there."

Oscar stared. "What made it so?"

"The remembrance of my father. Every face I met, every stick and stone about the place seemed to reproach me with his death. And justly. But for my carelessness he would not have died."

"Well, that is all past and gone, Robert. You shall come back to the Grange with me. You will be safe there."

"No. It is too late."

"It is not too late. What do you mean? If ——"

"I tell you it is too late," burst out Robert, in a sharp tone: and Oscar thought it was full of anguish.

He tried persuasion, he tried anger; and no impression whatever could he make on Robert Dalrymple. *He* thought Robert was wilfully, wickedly obstinate; the secret truth being that Robert was ruined. Oscar told him he "washed his hands" of him, and departed.

It chanced that same afternoon that Robert was passing through Grosvenor Square and met Mr. Grubb close to his house. Looking at him casually, reader, he has not changed; he has the same noble presence, the same gracious manner; nevertheless, the fifteen or sixteen months that have elapsed since his marriage, have brought a look of care to his refined and thoughtful face, a line of pain to its brow. They shook hands.

"Will you come in, Robert?"

"I don't mind if I do," was the answer—for in good truth Robert Dalrymple was too wretched not to seize on anything that might serve to divert him from his own thoughts. But Mr Grubb paused in sudden remembrance.

"Mary is here to-day. Have you any objection to meet her?"

"Objection! I shall like it," answered Robert, with a flush of emotion, for Mary Lynn was still inexpressibly dear to him. "I wish with my whole heart she was my wife—that we had never parted! It was all my foolish doing."

"I thought at the time you were rather chivalrous: I must say that," observed Mr. Grubb, regarding him attentively. "I suppose, in point of fact, you are both waiting for one another now."

"Why do you say that?" asked the young man in evident agitation.

"Step in here, Robert," said Mr. Grubb, drawing him through the hall to his own study. "Mary persistently refuses to accept good offers: she has had two during the past year; therefore, I conclude that she and you have some private understanding on the point. I told her so one day, and all the answer I got consisted of a laugh and a blush."

It could have been nothing to the blush that rose to Robert's face now; brow, ears, neck, were dyed blood-red. The terrible consciousness of how untrue this was, how untrue it was obliged to be, was smiting him with reproachful stings. Mr. Grubb mistook the signs.

"I think," he said, "that former parting was a mistake. It was perfectly right and just that Mrs. Dalrymple should have been well provided for, but ——"

"You think I should have taken Moat Grange myself, and procured another home for my mother," interrupted Robert. "Most people do think so. But, if you knew how I hated the sight of the Grange!—never a single room of it but my poor dead father's face seemed to rise up to confront me!"

"It might have been best that you should remain in your own home; we will not discuss it now. What I want to say, is this—that if you and Mary have been really living upon hope, I don't see why you need live on it any longer. A portion of your own revenues you may surely claim, a few hundreds yearly; and Mary shall bring as much grist to the mill on her side."

"You are very kind, very thoughtful," murmured Robert.

"But there must be a proviso to that," continued Mr. Grubb. "Reports have reached me that Robert Dalrymple is going headlong to the bad—pardon me if I speak out the whispers freely—that he is becoming reckless, a gamester, I know not what all. I do not believe this, Robert; I do not wish to believe it. I have seen nothing to confirm it myself; you are in one set of London men, I am in another. In a young man situated as you are, alone, without home-ties, some latitude of conduct may be pardoned; if he be a good man and true, he will soon pull himself straight again. If you can assure me

on your honour it is nothing more than this, well and good. If it be more—if the worst of the whispers but indicate the truth, you cannot of course think of Mary. Robert, I say I leave this to your honour.”

“I should like to pull myself up beyond any earthly thing,” spoke the young man in a flash of what looked far more like despair than hope. “If I *could* do it—and if Mary were my wife—I—I—should have no fear. Let us talk of this another day. Let me see her!”

Mary was just then alone in what they called the grey drawing-room. A lovely room; as indeed all the rooms were in Mr. Grubb’s house, made so by him in his love for his wife. He went in search of his wife, giving Robert the opportunity of seeing Mary alone.

Let no woman go to the altar cherishing dislike or contempt of him who is to be her husband. Marriages of indifference are made in plenty, and in time they may become unions of affection. But the other!—it is the most fatal mistake that can be made. Lady Adela treated her husband with scorn, *did so systematically*; she did not attempt to conceal her dislike; she threw his love back upon him. On the very day of their marriage when she, in what appeared to be a fit of petulance, drew down all the blinds of the chariot as they drove away from Lord Acorn’s door, and he, taking advantage of the privacy, laid his hand on hers, and bent to whisper a word of love, perhaps to take a kiss from her cheek, she effectually repressed him. “Pray do not attempt these—endearments,” she said in a scornful tone, “they are not agreeable.” Francis Grubb drew back to his corner of the carriage, and a bitter blight fell upon his spirit.

Just now, and for some months past, Lady Adela had been pale and thin, sick and ill. She resented the indisposition strongly, for it prevented her joining in the gaiety she loved, and went about wishing fretfully that her baby was born.

“Oh, Robert! *Robert!*”

Mary Lynn had started up with the cry, so surprised was she to see him enter. She stood blushing even to tears. And Robert? Conscious how unworthy he was of her, how impossible it was that he should dare to claim her, while the love within him was beating on his heart with lively pain, he sat down with a groan and covered his face with his hands. She thought he was ill. She went to him and knelt down, and looked up at him in appealing fear.

“Oh, Robert, what is—what is amiss?”

And for answer, Robert Dalrymple, utterly overcome by the vivid sense of the remorseful past, of the despair for the future, let his face fall down upon her shoulder, and burst into a fit of those heart-rending sobs, which are so terrible for a man to shed.

(*To be continued.*)

THE STORY OF DOROTHY GRAPE.

WE found her out through Mr. Brandon's nephew: a medical student, who gave his people trouble, and one day got his arm and head broken. Mr. Brandon and the Squire were staying in London at the Tavistock Hotel. I, Johnny Ludlow, was at Miss Deveen's on a visit you have heard of before; but there's no time to recur to that. News of the accident was brought to Mr. Brandon: the young man had been carried into No. 60, Gibraltar Terrace, Islington district, and a doctor named Pitt was attending him.

We went to see him at once. A narrow, quiet street, as I recollected well, this Gibraltar Terrace, the dwellings it contained facing each other, thirty in a row. No. 60 proved to be the same house to which we had gone before, when enquiring about the illness of Francis Radcliffe, and Pitt was the same doctor. It was the same landlady also; I knew her as soon as she opened the door; a slender, faded woman, past middle life, with a pink flush on her thin cheeks, and something of the lady about her.

"What an odd thing, Johnny!" whispered the Squire. "Mapping, I remember her name was."

Mr. Brandon went upstairs to his nephew. We were shown by her into the small parlour, which looked as faded as it had looked on our last visit, years before: as faded as she was. While telling us how the accident occurred, she had to run away at a call from upstairs.

"Looks uncommonly care-worn, doesn't she, Johnny!" remarked the Squire. "Seems a nice sort of person, though."

"Yes, sir. I like her. Does it strike you that her voice has a home-ring in it? I think she must be from Worcestershire."

"A home-ring—Worcestershire!" retorted he. "It wouldn't be you, Johnny, if you did not get up some fancy or other.—Here she comes!—You are not from Worcester, are you, ma'am?" cried the Squire, going to the root of the question at once, in his haste to convict my fancy of its sins.

"Yes, I am, sir," she replied; and I saw the pink flush on her cheeks deepen to a crimson hectic. "I knew you, sir, when I was a young girl, many years ago. Though I should not have recognised you when you were last here, but that you left your card. We lived at Islip, sir; at that pretty cottage with the yellow roses round the porch. You must remember Dolly Grape."

"But you are not Dolly Grape!" returned the Squire, pushing up his spectacles.

"Yes, sir, I was Dolly Grape. Your mother knew us well, sir so did you."

"Goodness bless my heart!" softly cried the Squire, gazing at her as if the news were too much for him. And then, starting up impulsively, he grasped her hand and gave it a hearty shake. A sob seemed to take her throat. The Squire sat back again, and went on staring at her.

"My father disappeared mysteriously on one of his journeys: you may remember us by that, sir."

"To be sure, I remember it—Robert Grape!" assented the Squire. "Had to do with the post-horse duty. Got as far as Bridgenorth, and was never heard of more. And it is really you—Dolly Grape! And you are living here! I'm afraid the world has not been over-kind to you."

She shook her head; the tears were running down her faded cheeks. "No, it has not, sir. I have had nothing but ups and downs in life since leaving Worcester: sad misfortunes: sometimes, I think, more than my share of them. Perhaps you heard that I married, sir—one Mr. Mapping?"

The Squire nodded slightly. He was too busy gazing at her to pay attention to much else.

"I am looking at you to see if I can trace the old features of the old days," he said; "and I do; they grow upon my memory; though you were but a slip of a girl when I used to see you. I wonder I did not recognise you at first."

"And I wonder that you can even recognise me now, sir," she returned: "trouble and grief have so much altered me. I have been in this house nearly ten years now. I live by letting lodgings."

"It can't be much of a living, once the rent and taxes are paid."

Mrs. Mapping's mild blue eyes, that seemed to the Squire to be of a lighter tinge than of yore, took a passing sadness. Anybody able to read it correctly might have seen she had her struggles.

"Are you a widow?"

"I—call myself one, sir," she replied, with hesitation.

"*Call* yourself one!" retorted the Squire, for he liked people to be straightforward in their speech. "My good woman, you are a widow, or you are not."

"I pass for one, sir."

"Now, what on earth do you mean?" demanded he. "Is your husband—Mapping—not dead?"

"He was not dead when I last heard of him, sir; that's a long while ago. But he is not my husband."

"Not your husband!" echoed the Squire, pushing up his spectacles again. "Have you and he quarrelled and parted?"

Any countenance more pitifully sad than Mrs. Mapping's was at that moment, I'd not wish to see. She stood smoothing down her black silk apron (which had a slit in it) with trembling fingers.

"My history is a very painful one," she said at last in a low voice. "I will tell it if you wish; but not this morning. I should like to

tell it you, sir. It is some time since I saw a home face ; and I have often pictured to myself some kind friendly face of those old happy days looking at me while I told it. Different days from these."

"These cannot be much to boast of," repeated the Squire. "It must be a precarious sort of living."

"Of course it fluctuates," she said. "Sometimes my rooms are full, at others empty. One has to put the one against the other and strive to tide over the hard days. Mr. Pitt is very good to me in recommending the rooms to medical students ; he is a good-natured man."

"Oh, indeed ! Listen to that, Johnny ! Pitt good-natured ! Rather a loose man, though, I fancy, ma'am."

"What, Mr. Pitt ? Sir, I don't think so. He has a surgery close by, and gets a good bit of practice. He ——"

The rest was interrupted by Mr. Pitt himself ; he came to say we might go up to Mr. Brandon. We had reason to think ill enough of Pitt in regard to the Radcliffe business ; but the Squire could not tackle him about the past off-hand, it not being just the time or place for it. Later, when he did so, it was found that we had been misjudging the man. Pitt had not joined Stephen Radcliffe in any conspiracy ; and the false letter, telling of Frank's death at Dr. Dale's, had not been written by him. So we saw that it must have been concocted by Stephen himself.

"Any way, if I did write such a letter, I retained no consciousness of it afterwards," added Pitt, with candour. "I am sorry to say, Mr. Todhetley, that I gave way to drink at that time, and I know I was often not myself. But I do not think it likely that I wrote it ; and as to joining Mr. Radcliffe in any conspiracy against his brother, why I would not do such a thing, drunk or sober, and I never knew it had been done."

"You have had the sense to pull up," cried the Squire, in reference to what Pitt had admitted.

"Yes," answered Pitt, in a voice hardly above a whisper. "And I never think of what I might have become by this time, save for the pulling up, but I thank God."

It is not, however, with Mr. Pitt, his virtues or his failings, that this paper concerns itself, but with the history of Dorothy Grape.

We must take it up from the time Dorothy arrived in London with her husband, Alick Mapping, after their marriage at Worcester, as already told of. The sum of three hundred pounds, owned by Dolly, passed into Mr. Mapping's possession on the wedding-day, for she never suggested such a thing as that it should be settled on herself. The proceeds, arising from the sale of the furniture, were also transmitted to him by the auctioneer. Thus he had become the proprietor of Dolly, and of all her worldly goods. After that, he and she faded out of Worcestershire memory, and from the sight of Worcestershire people—save for one brief meeting, to be mentioned presently.

The home in London, to which her husband conveyed her, and of which he had boasted, Dolly found to be lodgings. Lodgings recently engaged by him, a sitting-room and bed-room in the Blackfriars Road. They were over a shop, kept by one Mrs. Turk, who was their landlady. "I would not fix upon a house, dear, without you," he said; and Dolly thanked him. All he did was right to her. She was, as he had told her she would be, happy as a cricket, though bewildered with the noisy bustle of the great town, and hardly daring to venture alone into its busy streets, more crowded than was Worcester Cathedral on the Sundays Mr. Benson preached. The curious elucidation at Gloucester of what her father's fate had been was a relief to her mind, rather than the contrary, once she had got over its sadness; though the still more curious doubt about her brother Tom, whispered to her by Elizabeth Deavor on her wedding morning, was rarely absent from it. But Dolly was young, Dolly was in love, and Dolly was intensely happy. Her husband took her to the theatres, to Vauxhall, and to other places of amusement; and Dolly began to think life was going to be a golden valley into which care would never penetrate.

This happy state of things changed. Mr. Mapping took to be a great deal away from home, sometimes for weeks together. He laid the fault upon his business; travellers in the wine trade had to go all over England, he said. Dolly was not unreasonable and accepted the explanation cheerfully.

But something else happened now and then that was less satisfactory. Mr. Mapping would appear at home in a condition that frightened Dolly: as if he had made the mistake of tasting the wine samples himself, instead of carrying them to his customers. Never having been brought into contact with anything of the kind in her own home, she regarded it with terror and dismay.

Then another phase of discomfort set in: the money seemed to grow short. Dolly could not get from her husband what was needed for their moderate expenses; which were next to nothing when he was away from home. She cried a little one day when she wanted some badly and he told her he had none to give her. Upon which, Mr. Mapping turned cross. There was no need of tears, he said: it would all come right if she did not bother. Dolly, in her secret heart, hoped he would not have to break in upon what he called their "nest egg," that three hundred pounds in the bank. A nest egg which, as he had more than once assured her, it was his intention to keep intact.

Only in one thing had Mr. Mapping been arbitrary: he would not allow her to hold any communication with Worcester. When they first came to London, he forbade Dolly to write to any of her former friends, or to give them her address. "You have no relatives there," he said, "only a few acquaintances, and I would prefer, Dolly, that you dropped them altogether." Of course she obeyed him: though

it prevented her writing to ask Elizabeth Deavor whether she had again seen Tom.

Things, despite Mr. Mapping's assurances, did not come right. As the spring advanced, his absences became more marked and the money less plentiful. Dolly shed many tears. She knew not what to do; for, as the old song says, "Lips, though blooming, must still be fed, and not e'en love can live on flowers."

Mrs. Turk grew uneasy. Dolly assured her there was no occasion for that; that if the worst came to the worst, they must break into the "nest egg" they had, lying by in the Bank of England—the three hundred pounds left her by her mother.

One bright day in May, Dolly, pining for the outdoor sunshine, betook herself to Hyde Park, a penny roll in her pocket for her dinner. The sun glittered in the blue sky, the air was warm, the birds chirped in the trees and hopped on the green grass. Dolly sat on a bench enjoying the sweetness and the tranquillity, thinking how very delightful life might be when no evil stepped in to mar it.

Two quakeress ladies approached arm in arm, talking busily. Dolly started up with a cry: for the younger one was Elizabeth Deavor. She had come to London with a friend for the May meetings. The two girls were delighted to see each other, but Elizabeth was pressed for time.

"Why did thee never write to me, Dorothy? I had but one letter from thee, written at Gloucester, telling me, thee knows, all about thy poor father." And, to this, Dolly murmured some lame excuse.

"I wanted to write to thee, but I had not thy address. I promised thee I would look out for Tom——"

"And have you seen him again?" interrupted Dolly in excitement. "Oh, Elizabeth!"

"I have seen the boy again, but it was not Tom: and I am very sorry that my fancy misled me and caused me to excite thy hopes. It was only recently, in Fourth month. I saw the same boy standing in the same place before thy old gate, his arms folded, and looking at the house as before, in the moonlight. I ran out, and caught his arm, and held it while he told me who he was and why he came there. It was not thy brother, Dorothy, but the likeness to him is marvellous."

"No?—not he?" gasped Dolly, wofully disappointed.

"It is one Richard East," said Elizabeth; "a young sailor. He lived with his mother in that house before she died, and when he comes home from a voyage now, and is staying with his friends in Melcheapen Street, he likes to go up there and have a good look at it. That is all. As I say, I am sorry to have misled thee. We think there cannot be a doubt that poor Tom really lost his life that night in the canal. And art thee nicely, Dorothy?—and is thy husband well? Thee art looking very thin. Fare thee well."

The summer passed, Dolly hardly knew how. She was often re-

duced to straits, often and often went dinnerless. Mrs. Turk only got a portion of what was due to her by fits and starts. Mr. Mapping himself made light of troubles; they did not seem to touch him much; he was always in spirits and always well dressed.

"Alick, you should draw a little of that money in the bank," his wife ventured to suggest one day when Mrs. Turk had been rather troublesome. "We cannot go on like this."

"Break in upon our nest-egg!" he answered. "Not if I know it, Dolly. Mrs. Turk must wait."

A little circumstance was to happen that gave some puzzle to Dolly. She had been married about fourteen months, and her husband was, as she believed, on his travels in Yorkshire, when Lord Mayor's Day occurred. Mrs. Turk, a good woman in the main, and compassionating the loneliness of the young wife, offered to take her to see the show, having been invited to an upper window of a house in Cheapside. Of all the sights in the world Dolly quite believed that must be the greatest, and felt delighted. They went, took up their station at the window, and the show passed. If it had not quite come up to Dolly's expectation, she did not say so.

"A grand procession, is it not, Mrs. Mapping," cried her companion, gazing after the tail of it with admiring eyes.

"Very," said Dolly. "I wonder—Good gracious!" she broke off, with startling emphasis, "there's my husband!"

"Where?" asked Mrs. Turk, her eyes bent on the surging crowd below.

"There," said Dolly, pointing with her finger; "there! He is arm-in-arm with two others. How very strange! It was only yesterday I got a letter from him from Bradford, saying he should be detained there for some time to come. How I wish he had looked up here!"

Mrs. Turk had failed to single him out amid the moving masses. And as Mr. Mapping did not make his appearance at home that evening, or for many evenings to come, she concluded that the young wife must have been mistaken.

When Mr. Mapping did appear, he said the same, telling Dolly she must have "seen double," for that he had not been in London. Dolly did not insist, but she felt staggered and uncomfortable; she felt *certain* it was her husband she saw.

How long the climax would have been postponed, or in what way it might have disclosed itself, but for something that occurred, cannot be conjectured. This wretched kind of life went on until the next spring. Dolly was reduced to perplexity. She had parted with all the pretty trinkets her mother left her; she would live for days together upon bread and butter and tears; and a most unhappy suspicion had instilled itself into her mind—that the nest-egg no longer existed. But even yet she found excuses for her husband; she thought that all doubt might still be explained away. Mrs. Turk was very

good, and did not worry ; Dolly did some plain sewing for her, and made her a gown or two.

On one of these spring days, when the sun was shining brightly on the pavement outside, Dolly went out on an errand. She had not gone many steps from the door when a lady, very plainly dressed, came up and accosted her quietly.

"Young woman, I wish to ask why you have stolen away my husband?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the startled Dolly. "What do you mean?"

"You call yourself Mrs. Mapping."

"I am Mrs. Mapping."

The stranger shook her head. "We cannot converse here," she said. "Allow me to go up to your room"—pointing to it. "I know you lodge there."

"But what is it that you want with me?" objected Dolly, who did not like all this.

"You think yourself the wife of Alick Mapping. You think you were married to him."

Dolly wondered whether the speaker had escaped from that neighbouring stronghold, Bedlam. "I don't know what it is you wish to insinuate," she said. "I was married to Mr. Mapping at St. Martin's Church in Worcester, more than eighteen months ago."

"Ay! But I, his wife, was married to him in London seven years ago. Yours was no marriage; he deceived you."

Dolly's face was turning all manner of colours. She felt frightened nearly to death.

"Take me to your room and I will tell you all that you need to know. Do not fear I shall reproach you; I am only sorry for you; it has been no fault of yours. He is a finished deceiver, as I have learnt to my cost."

Dolly led the way. Seated together, face to face, her eyes strained on the stranger's, she listened to the woful tale, which was gently told. That it was true she could not doubt. Alick Mapping had married her at St. Martin's Church in Worcester, but he had married this young woman some years previous to it.

"You are thinking that I look older than my husband," said she, misinterpreting Dolly's gaze. "That is true. I am five years older, and am now approaching my fortieth year. He pretended to fall in love with me; I thought he did; but what he really fell in love with was my money."

"How did you come to know about me?—how did you find it out?" gasped Dolly.

"It was through Mrs. Turk, your landlady," answered the true wife. "She has been suspecting that something or other was wrong, and she talked of it to a friend of hers who chances to know my family. This friend was struck with the similarity of name—the

Alick Mapping whose wife was here, and the Alick Mapping whose wife lived at Hackney."

"How long is it since he left you?" asked poor Dolly.

"He has not left me. He has absented himself inexplicably at times for a year or two past, but he is still with me. He is at home now, at this present moment. I have a good home, you must understand, and a good income, which he cannot touch; he would think twice before giving up that. Had you money?" continued the lady abruptly.

"I had three hundred pounds. He told me he had placed it in the Bank of England; I think he did do that; and that he should never draw upon it, but leave it there for a nest-egg."

Mrs. Mapping smiled in pity. "You may rely upon it that there's not a shilling left of it: money in his hands, when he can get hold of any, runs out of them like water."

"Is it true that he travels for a wine house?"

"Yes—and no. It is his occupation, but he is continually throwing up his situations: pleasure has more attraction for him than work: and he will be a gentleman at large for months together. Yet not a more clever man of business exists than he is known to be, and he can get a place at any time."

"Have you any children?" whispered Dolly.

"No. Shall you prosecute him?"

"Shall I—what?" cried Dolly, aghast.

"Prosecute him for the fraud he has committed on you?"

"Oh, dear! the exposure would kill me," shivered the unhappy girl. "I shall only hope to run away and hide myself for ever."

"Every syllable I have told you is truth," said the stranger, producing a slip of paper as she rose to depart. "Here are two or three references by which you can verify it. Mrs. Turk will do it for you if you do not care to stir in it yourself. Will you shake hands with me?"

Dolly assented, and burst into a whirlwind of tears.

Nothing seemed to be left for her, as she said, but to run away and hide herself. All the money was gone, and she was left penniless and helpless. By the aid of Mrs. Turk, who proved a good friend to her, she got a situation in a small preparatory school near Croydon, as needle-woman and companion to the mistress. She called herself Mrs. Mapping still, and continued to wear her wedding ring; she did not know what else to do. She *had* been married, truly, as she had believed, and what had come of it was surely no fault of hers.

A little good fortune fell to her in time; a little bit. For years she remained in that school at Croydon, until, as it seemed to herself, she was middle-aged, and then the mistress of it died. Having no relatives, she left her savings and her furniture to Dolly. With the money Dolly set up the house in Gibraltar Terrace, put the furniture into it, and began to let lodgings. A young woman, who had

been teacher in the school, and whom Dolly regarded as her sister, and often called her so, removed to it with her and stayed with her until she married.

These particulars—which we listened to one evening from her own lips—were gloomy enough. The Squire went into an explosive fit over Alick Mapping.

“The despicable villain! What has become of him?”

“I never saw him after his wife came to me,” she answered, “but Mrs. Turk would get news of him now and then. Since Mrs. Turk’s death, I have heard nothing. Sometimes I think he may be dead.”

“I hope he was hung!” flashed the Squire.

Well—to hasten on. That was Dorothy Grape’s history since she left Worcester; and a nice cruel one it was!

We saw her once or twice again before quitting London. And the Squire left a substantial present with her, for old remembrance sake.

“She looks as though she needed it, Johnny,” said he. “Poor thing! poor thing! And such a pretty, happy little maiden as she used to be, standing in her pinafore amid the yellow roses in the porch at Islip! Johnny, lad, I *hope* that vagabond came to be hung!”

It was ever so long afterwards, and the time had gone on by years, when we again fell into the thread of Dorothy Grape’s life. The Squire was in London for a few days upon some law business, and had brought me.

“I should like to see how that poor woman’s getting on, Johnny,” he said to me one morning. “Suppose we go down to Gibraltar Terrace?”

It was a dull, damp, misty day at the close of autumn; and when the Squire turned in at No. 60, after dismissing the cab, he stood still and stared, instead of knocking. A plate was on the door, “James Noak, carpenter and joiner.”

“Has she left, do you think, Johnny?”

“Well, sir, we can ask. Perhaps the carpenter is only lodging here?”

A tidy young woman, with a baby in her arms, answered the knock. “Does Mrs. Mapping live here still?” asked the Squire.

“No, sir,” she answered. “I don’t know the name.”

“Not know the name!” retorted he, turning crusty; for he disliked, of all things, to be puzzled or thwarted. “Mrs. Mapping lived here for ten or a dozen years, anyhow.”

“Oh stay, sir,” she said, “I remember the name now. Mapping; yes, that was it. She lived here before we came in.”

“Is she dead?”

“No, sir. She was sold up.”

"Sold up?"

"Yes, sir. Her lodging-letting fell off—this neighbourhood's not what it was: people like to get further up Islington way—and she was badly off for a long while, could not pay her rent, or anything, so at last the landlord was obliged to sell her up. At least, that's what we heard after we came here, but the house lay empty for some months between. I did not hear what became of her."

The people at the next house could not tell anything; they were fresh comers also; and the Squire stood in a quandary. I thought of Pitt the surgeon; he was sure to know; and ran off to his surgery in the next street.

Changes seemed to be everywhere. Pitt's small surgery had given place to a chemist's shop. The chemist stood behind his counter in a white apron. Pitt? Oh, Pitt had taken to a practice further off, and drove his brougham. "Mrs. Mapping?" added the chemist, in further answer to me. "Oh, yes, she lives still in the same terrace. She came to grief at No. 60, poor woman, and lodges now at No. 32. Same side of the way; this end."

No. 32 had its plate on the door: "Miss Kester, dressmaker": and Miss Kester herself—a neat little woman, with a reserved, not to say sour, face and manner, and a cloud of pins sticking out of her brown waistband—answered the knock. She sent us up to a small back room at the top of the house.

Mrs. Mapping sat sewing near a fireless grate, her bed in one corner; she looked very ill. I had thought her thin enough before; she was a shadow now. The blue eyes had a piteous look in them, the cheeks a red-leafed hectic.

"Yes," she said, in answer to the Squire, her voice faint and her cough catching her every other minute, "it was a sad misfortune for me to be turned out of my house; it nearly broke my heart. The world is full of trouble, sir."

"How long is it since?"

"Nearly eighteen months, sir. Miss Kester had this room to let, and I came into it. It is quiet and cheap; only half a crown a week."

"And how do you get the half-crown?" questioned the Squire.

"And your dinner and breakfast—how do you get that?"

Mrs. Mapping passed her trembling fingers across her face before she answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell of these things, sir. I'm sorry you have found me out in my poverty. When I think of the old days at home, the happy and plentiful days when poor mother was living, and what a different life mine might have been but for the dreadful marriage I made, I—I can hardly bear up against it. I'm sure I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for giving way."

For the tears were streaming down her thin cheeks. The Squire set up a cough on his own account; I went to the window and looked down at some grimy back-gardens.

"When I am a little stronger, and able to do a full day's work again, I shall get on, sir, but I've been ill lately through going out in the wet and catching cold," she said, mastering the tears. "Miss Kester is very good in supplying me with as much as I can do."

"A grand 'getting on,'" cried the Squire. "You'd be all the better for some fire in that grate."

"I might be worse off than I am," she answered meekly. "If it is but little that I have, I am thankful for it."

The Squire talked a while longer; then he put a sovereign into her hand, and came away with a gloomy look.

"She wants a bit of regular help," said he. "A few shillings paid to her weekly while she gets up her strength might set her going again. I wonder if we could find anybody to undertake it?"

"You would not leave it with herself in a lump, sir?"

"Why, no, I think not; she may have back debts, you see, Johnny, and be tempted to pay them with it; if so, practically it would be no good to her. Wish Pitt lived here still! Wonder if that Miss Kester might be trusted to—— There's a cab, lad! Hail it."

The next morning, when we were at breakfast at the hotel—which was not the Tavistock this time—the Squire burst into a state of excitement over his newspaper.

"Goodness me, Johnny! here's the very thing."

I wondered what had taken him, and what he meant; and for some time did not clearly understand. The Squire's eyes had fallen upon an advertisement, and also a leading article, treating of some great philanthropic movement that had recently set itself up in London. Reading the articles, I gathered that it had for its object the distribution of alms on an extensive scale and the comprehensive relieving of the distressed. Some benevolent gentlemen (so far as we could understand the newspaper) had formed themselves into a band for taking the general welfare of the needy into their hands, and devoted their lives to looking after their poverty-stricken brothers and sisters. A sort of universal, benevolent, set-the-world-to-rights invention.

The Squire was in raptures. "If we had but a few more such good men in the world, Johnny! I'll go down at once and shake their hands. If I lived in London, I'd join them."

I could but laugh. Fancy the Squire going about from house to house with a bag of silver to relieve the needy!

Taking note of the office occupied by these good men, we made our way to it. Only two of them were present that morning: a man who looked like a clerk, for he had books and papers before him; and a thin gentleman in spectacles.

The Squire shook him by the hand at once, breaking into an ovation at the good deeds of the benevolent brotherhood, that should have made the spectacles before us, as belonging to a member of it, blush.

"Yes," he said, his cool, calm tones contrasting with the Squire's hot ones, "we intend to effect a work that has never yet been attempted. Why, sir, by our exertions three parts of the complaints of hunger, and what not, will be done away with."

The Squire folded his hands in an ecstasy of reverence. "That is, you will relieve it," he remarked. "Bountiful Samaritans!"

"Relieve it, certainly—where the recipients are found to be deserving," returned the other. "But non-deserving cases—impostors, ill-doers, and the like—will get punishment instead of relief, if we can procure it for them."

"Quite right, too," warmly assented the Squire. "Allow me to shake your hand again, sir. And you gentlemen are out every day upon this good work! Visiting from house to house!"

"Some of us are out every day: we devote our time to it."

"And your money, too, of course!" exclaimed the Squire. "Listen, Johnny Ludlow," he cried, turning to me, his red face glowing more and more with every word, "I hope you'll take a lesson from this, my lad! Their time, and their money too!"

The thin gentleman cleared his throat. "Of course we cannot do all in the way of money ourselves," he said; "some of us, indeed, cannot do anything in that way. Our operations are very large; a great deal is needed, and we have to depend upon a generous public for help."

"By their making subscriptions to it?" cried the Squire.

"Undoubtedly."

The Squire tugged at an inner pocket. "Here, Johnny, help me to get out my cheque-book." And when it was got at, he drew a cheque for ten pounds there and then, and laid it on the table.

"Accept this, sir," he said, "and my praises with it. And now I should like to recommend to your notice a case myself—a most deserving one. Will you take it in hand?"

"Certainly."

The Squire gave Mrs. Mapping's address, telling briefly of her present distress and weakly state, and intimated that the best mode of relief would be to allow her a few shillings weekly. "You will be sure to see to her?" was his parting injunction. "She may starve if you do not."

"Have no fear: it is our business to do so," repeated the thin gentleman. "Good day."

"Johnny," said the Squire, going up the street sideways in his excitement, "it is refreshing to hear of these self-denying deeds. These good men must be going on straight for heaven!"

"Take care, sir! Look where you are going."

He had bumped up against a foot-passenger who was hurrying along. It was Pitt, the surgeon. The Squire excused his flurry by telling where he had come from.

"Been *there*!" exclaimed Pitt, bursting into a laugh. "Wish you joy! We call it Benevolence Hall."

"And a very apt name, too," said the Squire. "Such men ought to be canonized, Pitt."

"Hope they will be!" answered Pitt in a curious kind of tone. "I can't stop now, Mr. Todhetley; am on my way to a consultation."

"He slips from one like an eel," cried the Squire. "I might have spoken to him about Mrs. Mapping. But my mind is at ease with regard to her, Johnny, now that these charitable men have the case in hand: and we shall be up again in a few weeks."

It was nearly two months before we were again in London, and winter weather: the same business, connected with a lawsuit, calling the Squire up.

"And now for Mrs. Mapping," he said to me during the afternoon of the second day. So we went to Gibraltar Terrace.

"Yes, she is in her room," said Miss Kester in a resentful tone. "It is a good thing somebody's come at last to see after her! I don't care to have her alone here on my hands to die."

"To die!" cried the Squire sharply, supposing she spoke only in temper. "What is she dying of?"

"Starvation," answered Miss Kester.

"Why, what on earth do you mean, ma'am?" demanded he. "Starvation!"

"I've done what I could for her, so far as a cup of tea might go, and a morsel of bread-and-butter once a day, or perhaps a drop of broth," ran on Miss Kester in the same aggrieved tone. "But it has been hard times with myself lately, and I have my old mother to keep and a bedridden sister. What she has wanted is a supply of nourishing food; and she has had as good as none of any sort since you were here, being too weak to work; and so rapid consumption came on."

She whisked upstairs with the candle, for the short winter day was already closing, and we followed her. Mrs. Mapping sat in an old easy chair, over a handful of fire, her thin cotton shawl folded round her: white, panting, attenuated, starved; and—there could not be much mistake in it—dying.

"Starved? dying? dear, dear!" ejaculated the Squire, backing to the other chair and sitting down in a sort of terror. "What has become of the people at Benevolence Hall?"

"They!" cried Miss Kester contemptuously. "You don't suppose those people would spend money to keep a poor woman from dying, do you, sir?"

"Why, it is their business to do it," said the Squire. "I put Mrs. Mapping's case into their hands, and they undertook to see to it."

"To see to it, perhaps, sir, but not to relieve it; I should be sur-

prised if they did that. One of them called here ever so many weeks ago and frightened Mrs. Mapping with his harsh questions ; but he gave her nothing."

"I don't understand all this," cried the Squire, rumpling back his hair. "Was it a gentleman?"—turning to Mrs. Mapping.

"He was dressed as one," she said, "but he was loud and dictatorial, almost as though he thought me a criminal instead of a poor sick woman. He asked me all kinds of questions about my past life, where I had lived and what I had done, and took down the answers."

"Go on," said the Squire, as she paused for breath.

"As they sent me no relief and did not come again, Miss Kester, after two or three weeks, was good enough to send a messenger to the place. He saw the gentlemen there and told them I was getting weaker daily and was in dreadful need, if they would please to give me a trifle; he said we should never have thought of applying to them but for their having come to see after me. The gentlemen answered no; that they had made enquiries and found the case was one not suitable for relief, that I did not deserve it. I—I—have never done anything wrong willingly," sobbed the poor woman, breaking down.

"I don't think she has, sir; she don't seem like it; and I'm sure she struggled hard enough to get a living at No. 60," said Miss Kester. "Anyway, they did nothing for her—have just left her to starve and die."

I had seen the Squire in many a temper, but never in a worse than now. He flung out of the room, calling upon me to follow him, and climbed into the hansom that waited for us outside.

"To Benevolence Hall," roared he, "and drive like the deuce."

"Yes, sir," said the man. "Where is Benevolence Hall?"

I gave him the address, and the man whirled us to Benevolence Hall in a short space of time. The Squire leaped out and indoors, finely primed. In the office stood a young man, going over some accounts by gaslight. His flaxen hair was parted down the middle, and he looked uncommonly simple. The rest of the benevolent gentlemen had left for the day.

What the Squire said at first, I hardly know: I don't think he knew himself. His words came tumbling out in a way that astonished the clerk.

"Mrs. Mapping?" cried the young man, when he could understand a little what the anger was about. "Your ten pounds?—meant for her, you say—"

"Yes, my ten pounds," wrathfully broke in the Squire; "my ten-pound cheque that I paid down here on this very table. What have you done with it?"

"Oh, that ten pounds has been spent, partly so, at least, in making enquiries about the woman, looking-up her back history and that.

Looking-up the back lives of people takes a lot of money, you see."

"But why did you not relieve her with it, or a portion of it? That is the question I've come to ask, young man, and I intend to have it answered."

The young man looked all surprise. "Why, what an idea!" lisped he. "Our association does not profess to help sinners. That would be a go!"

"Sinners!"

"We can't be expected to take up a sinner, you know—and she's a topping one," continued he, keeping just as cool as the Squire was hot. "We found out all sorts of dreadful things against the woman. The name, Mapping, is not hers, to begin with. She went to church with a man who had a living wife——"

"She didn't," burst in the Squire. "It was the man who went to church with her. And I hope with all my heart he came to be hanged!"

The clerk considered. "It comes to the same, doesn't it?" said he simply. "She did go to church with him; and it was ever so long before his proper wife found it out. And she has gone on calling herself Mapping ever since! And she managed so badly in a lodging-house she set up, that she was sold out of it for rent. Consider that! Oh, indeed then, it is not on such people as these that our good gentlemen would waste their money."

"What do they waste it on?" demanded the Squire.

"Oh, come now! They don't waste it. They spend it."

"What on? The sick and needy?"

"Well, you see, the object of this benevolent association is to discover who is deserving and who is not. When an applicant comes or sends for relief, representing that he is sick and starving, and all the rest of it, we begin by searching out his back sins and misfortunes. The chances are that a whole lot of ill turns up. If the case be really deserving, and—and white, you know, instead of black, we relieve it."

"Now look you here," retorted the Squire. "Your object, the enquiring into cases, may be a good one in the main and do some excellent service; I say nothing against it; but the public hold the impression that it is *relief* your association intends, not enquiry. Why is this erroneous impression not set to rights?"

"Oh, but our system is, I assure you, a grand one," cried the young fellow. "It accomplishes an immense good."

"And how much harm does it accomplish? Hold your tongue, young man! Do you suppose I should have given my ten pounds, but for being misled, for being allowed to infer that it would be expended on the distressed? Not a shilling of it. No money of mine shall aid in turning poor helpless creatures inside out to expose their sins, as you call it. *That's* not charity. What the sick and the

famished and the naked want, is a little kindly help—and the Bible enjoins us to give it.”

“But most of them are such a bad lot, you know.”

“All the more need they should be helped: they have bodies and souls to be saved, I suppose. Hold your silly tongue, I tell you. I should have seen to this poor sick woman myself, who is just as worthy as are you and your masters, but for their taking the case in hand. As it is, she has been left to starve and die. Come along, Johnny! Benevolence Hall, indeed!”

Back to Gibraltar Terrace now, the Squire fretting and fuming. He was hot and hasty, as the world knows, given to say anything that came uppermost, justifiable or non-justifiable: but in this affair it did seem that something or somebody must be wrong.

Mrs. Mapping had changed in that short time. I thought she was dying, thought so as I looked at her. There was a death-shade on the wan face, never seen but when the world is passing away. The Squire saw it also.

“Yes,” said Miss Kester gravely, in answer to his whisper. “I fear it is the end.”

“Goodness, bless me!” gasped the Squire. And he was for ordering in pretty nearly every known restorative the shops keep, from turtle-soup to calves’-foot jelly. Miss Kester shook her head.

“Too late, sir; too late. A month ago it would have saved her. Now, unless I am very much mistaken, the end is at hand.”

Well, he was in a way. If gold and silver could revive the dying, she’d have had it. He sent me out to buy a bottle of port wine, and got Miss Kester’s little apprentice to run for the nearest doctor.

“Not rally again at all, you say! all stuff and nonsense,” he was retorting on Miss Kester when I returned. “Here’s the wine, at last! Now for a glass, Johnny.”

She sipped about a teaspoonful by degrees. The shade on her face was getting darker. Her poor thin fingers kept plucking at the cotton shawl.

“I have never done any harm that I knew of: at least, not willingly,” she slowly panted, looking piteously at the Squire, evidently dwelling upon the accusation made by Benevolence Hall: and it had, Miss Kester said, troubled her frightfully. “I was only silly—and inexperienced—and—and believed in everybody. Oh, sir, it was hard!”

“I’d prosecute them if I could,” cried the Squire, fiercely. “There, there; don’t think about it any more; it’s all over.”

“Yes, it is over,” she sighed, giving the words a different meaning from his. “Over; over: the struggles and the disappointments, the privations and the pain. Only God sees what mine have been, and how I’ve tried to bear up in patience. Well, well; He knows best: and, I think—I do think, sir—He will make it up to us in Heaven. My poor mother thought the same when she was dying.”

"To be sure," answered the Squire, soothingly. "One must be a heathen not to know that.—Hang that set-the-world-to-rights company!" he muttered in a whisper.

"The bitterness of it all has left me," she whispered, with pauses between the words for lack of breath; "this world is fading from my sight, the world to come opening.—Only this morning, falling asleep in the chair here, after the fatigue of getting up—and putting on my things—and coughing—I dreamt I saw the Saviour holding out His hand to welcome me, and I knew he was waiting to take me up to God.—The clouds round about Him were of a soft rose colour; a light, as of gold, lay in the distance.—Oh, how lovely it all was! nothing but peace.—Yes, yes, God will forgive all our trials and our shortcomings, and make it up to us there."

The room had a curious hush upon it. It hardly seemed to be a living person speaking. Anyway, she would not be living long.

"Another teaspoonful of wine, Johnny," whispered the Squire. "Dear, dear! Where on earth can that doctor be?"

I don't believe a drop of it went down her throat. Miss Kester wiped away the damp from her brow. A cough took her; and afterwards she lay back again in the chair.

"Do you remember the yellow roses in the porch," she murmured, speaking, as must be supposed, to the Squire, but her eyes were closed: "how the dew on them used to glisten again in the sun on a summer's morning?—I was picking such a handful of them last night—beautiful roses, they were; sweet and beautiful as the flowers we shall pick in Heaven."

The doctor came upstairs, his shoes creaking. It was Pitt. Pitt! The girl had met him by chance, and told him what was amiss.

"Ah," said he, bending over the chair, "you have called me too late. I should have been here a month or two ago."

Nothing could be done for her; even the Squire, with all his impetuosity, saw that. Never another word did she speak, never another recognising gaze did she give. She just passed quietly away with a sigh as we stood looking at her; passed to that blissful realm we are all travelling to, and which had been the last upon her lips—Heaven.

And that is the true story of Dorothy Grape.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



IN THE NEW FOREST.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



RINGWOOD.

"SO you are in the New Forest," wrote a Norwegian friend to me. "I know it well. It is an old acquaintance of mine, and reminds me much of my own country."

And no doubt, for this reason, my friend not only knows the New Forest, but loves it also. Who does not love anything—a song, a name, a scent, a flower—that reminds us of our Fatherland, when from that land we have been absent long years? How we cling to the smallest trifle that brings back to us the scenes of youth, when the whole world was full of a careless joy born

partly of irresponsibility. How even the things and people then disliked and shunned become, through the sad pleasures of memory and the lapse of time, almost loved and revered!

Nevertheless—to return to my friend's letter—as far as my experience of Norway extends, you will have to travel long in that pleasant land before meeting with anything so beautiful and luxuriant as the trees and the glorious foliage of the New Forest. Yet, in replying, I spared him the observation. When prejudice kindly represents to us things as they are not, why disturb her sway? If the eyes are made happy by seeing with a somewhat distorted vision, why, with wanton cruelty, hold up the glasses that dissolve an innocent though it may be fictitious enjoyment? Many of our pleasures and delights in this world arise from little self-delusions that are harmless as they are merciful: just as many of our troubles, self-created, are born of the imagination and have no other existence. If we are made happier by dwelling in a fool's paradise, let us have it by all means. Yea,

more, let us love and cherish it. The strength to bear will come with the awaking.

Whether or not William the Conqueror was cruel and despotic in founding the New Forest, it is certain that he conferred a benefit upon posterity: not to the third and fourth generation only, but to one still existing and flourishing 800 years after the great man had passed away. Taking the brighter and better view of things, we will suppose that small cruelty and harm was done to anyone, and we will be grateful for the boon we reap to-day. How far in the future it will exist we need not enquire; our successors will fight their own battles, see to their own rights. Already half the forest has been enclosed and become private property—why not by-and-by the remainder? It is true, the gates of most of the places are thrown open at the summons of the stranger, by a little handmaiden who curtsies as she pockets the shilling that finds its way to a modest hand; and passing up the avenues the eye is gladdened and surprised by long, endless hedges of rhododendrons, that in their season put forth such an amazing wealth and beauty of blossom. Nevertheless, that boundless sense of freedom imparted by the forest has for the moment departed; a feeling of intrusion far less pleasant lurks there instead, and you are half inclined to resent this encroachment upon rights that were established 800 years ago.

However, half a loaf is better than no bread; there is still left enough and to spare of forest, enough of beauty wild and sylvan, as it is. We will take what we find, and be thankful.

He who is a good walker may find a great deal, and will have much the best chance of becoming acquainted with all the rare beauties of the New Forest. He may roam from dawn till dewy eve, and penetrate into dense solitudes, the gloom and semi-darkness of a thickly wooded copse, where the branches of the trees twine and intertwine, and the leaves mingle together, forming as thick a carpet overhead as he will find spread underfoot. And, roaming at will, hour after hour, he may never meet with fellow mortal; until at last this withdrawal from the world suddenly seizes upon him with nervous fear and fancy, and he hails with a sense of relief a small settlement, or a forest hut, or a retired village, where the swinging sign invites him to enter the inn of which it is the beacon, and break the long silence by a gossip with a chatty landlord.

These walks are full of a wild, unfamiliar loveliness. Here and there you come upon a charcoal burners' hut; a thing roughly picturesque, beautifully romantic as ever delighted the eye of an artist. And if you are lucky, the charcoal burners themselves will be at work, around their burning pile, the dancing, leaping flames throwing weird lights and lurid glares upon their rough countenances, until you might almost fancy them demons performing unholy rites.

The smoke ascends like incense, curling upwards with blue fantastic shapes. More grateful than the smell of incense is the scent of the

burning wood, the sound of the crackling faggot, recalling to mind those lines of poor Goldsmith :

"The cricket chirrup on the hearth,
The crackling faggot flies."

But there is no hearth here, no cricket. The lines suggest a picture the very opposite to anything found in the present scene. It possesses nothing domestic ; but suggests a roving, rambling, Bohemian life : not even the hand-to-mouth existence we often hear of, but the not knowing in the morning whether the midday meal will be earned before nightfall. Uncertainty has its charms, though the charms of such uncertainties as these must be very doubtful, very mythical.

And, since we are roving, and since we have mentioned Goldsmith, we may as well pause to record a slight circumstance which happened to us in connection with him some years ago. It will take us from the woods and glades and rippling streams of Hampshire to the busy haunts of men, but only for a moment. Thought, like electricity, can traverse space in a moment of time, and penetrate even to the very realms of eternity.

Wandering with a few friends one Sunday morning before church time, about the precincts of the Temple, we did what we had done many a time before : came to an anchor and fell a-musing in front of the low, long stone recording the short epitaph, so full of mournful suggestiveness that he who reposed beneath had, in spite of his genius, missed his grasp of life, and, like the wise man, found the world all vanity and vexation of spirit : the short and simple epitaph :

"HERE LIES POOR GOLDSMITH."

Something of the melancholy of the words no doubt influenced those who looked on, and we gazed in silent contemplation for some moments. Going backward in thought to the days of—to quote the favourite expression at Minerva House—"the great lexicographer:" the nightly meetings of that small circle of friends, not so many yards from where we were now standing : conspicuous amongst them that quaint figure of whom it might almost be recorded, "He never wrote a foolish thing, and never said a wise one." Scenes in the renowned "Vicar of Wakefield" passed before our imagination as we stood there : the happiness of the beautiful Sophia with her dear Burchell ; the sad fate of the fair but frail Olivia ; the dignified figure of the simple vicar as he preached to the wretches in prison, whose chains shook in "transport and rude harmony," though moved thereto by good cheer, not by his eloquence.

Suddenly our reveries were interrupted by the appearance of a venerable gentlewoman, who slowly approached up the narrow pavement. Seeing us wrapt in contemplation before this stone, she too paused and looked down. After a few moments' silence she summoned up courage, and turning to one of our number, said, in the

semi-whisper to which the voice unconsciously falls when speaking of sacred things :

“ Pray, sir, can you tell me who lies buried here ? ”

My friend answered in a manner for which I can make no excuse, and dared not at the time offer any apology. It proved again that there is but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous : that extremes meet. With a face of the most uncompromising gravity, that would have made the fortune of an actor upon the stage, he replied :

“ Oliver Cromwell, ma'am.”

The effect upon the venerable lady was startling. Her jaw relaxed, her face took a paler hue, her eyes a far-off, troubled look, in which you could almost read the fate of a murdered king, the terror of a blood-stained country. Almost as if fearing that the very bones of the Protector (Protector, forsooth !) would rise up to more mischief, she turned from the spot with an exclamation of dismay, and with slow and stately movement withdrew, a sadder, if not a wiser woman.

As for ourselves, sentiment and musing and the dreams of a past age were all put to flight. So rapid and ludicrous had been the change, that, but for respect for the day, these quiet precincts, like the Vicar of Wakefield's prison, might have shook with transports and rude harmony. But I had half a suspicion that the joke (if joke it could be called) had been unpremeditated on the part of my friend ; that the word had slipped out inadvertently ; and that, seeing its startling effect upon the old lady, he had neither the heart nor the conscience to set her right in the matter.

We have wandered far from the charcoal burners' watch hut, which you may chance upon here and there as you ramble about the New Forest. And if you are lucky, I have said you may chance upon the burners themselves. They are a race entitled to respect, for they have a lengthened pedigree. It was a charcoal burner, it is recorded, who first found the body of William Rufus, and some of his descendants may still be burning charcoal now, as he did then. In the course of a long chat they will repeat many words to you that no dictionary will interpret, so that occasionally the thread of their discourse is lost through this remnant of the back ages.

But it is not all “ Chinese,” as the Germans say (though they apply the word in a different sense), and you may get many an anecdote and quaint bit of experience, that will make any amount of time spent in their company as well a profit as a pleasure. They are, some of them, almost a wandering, gipsy tribe. Like causes produce like effects. Their roving life, in which they inhabit no houses, pay no taxes, are subject to no laws but the main laws of their country (the Peace Preservation Act still exists in England, at any rate), makes them an independent, sometimes too bold and free a race. But their merits must exceed their privileges, and their kindly actions probably often outstrip their opportunities. Are we able to say as much of ourselves ?

Passing along the high road, now rising to the top of the hill, and obtaining a distant view of Southampton Water ; now sinking into the valley and skirting the woods on either side ; after a drive of about ten miles from the Compton Arms you reach the quaint little town of Ringwood. Even here, all down the public road, that day, we had it to ourselves, never meeting with anyone ; until, getting into Ringwood, we came upon a huge waggon, driven by a huge waggoner, who was apparently of many minds, for he seemed to be going all ways at once.

Some hours after, in returning, we overtook this unfortunate being, crawling along in a very unhinged condition, waggon, horses, and all.



CHARCOAL BURNERS' HUT.

He asked the way to a town from which he was every moment receding, and when put right, turned in a dazed, hopelessly intoxicated condition. The chances were that six o'clock the next morning saw him still wandering about the earth, without a local habitation or a name : unless time had restored to him the right use of what senses he possessed. Time does for the most part lay bare to us our faults, and with relentless finger holds up to the light of our conscience our mistakes in life.

Ringwood is a quiet, somewhat primitive little town. Entering, as we did, from the solitudes of the New Forest—from nowhere, as it were—it appeared very far out of the world, and one almost wondered at the reason of its existence. It seemed so very useless and unnecessary. This, of course, was the mere effect of fancy. It not only exists, but was apparently an enterprising little place, consisting

to all appearances, chiefly of one long, and of course straggling, street : boasting a town-hall, a reading-room, a concert-room, and various institutions which proved the community an enlightened one. There was nothing remarkable in the exterior of the church, and our energy that afternoon was not sufficient to seek out the key-holder and explore the interior. But if report spoke correctly, it is not more remarkable than the outside.

Passing beyond the church, you soon come, in the neighbourhood of quaint, rustic cottages, to the old bridge spanning the Avon, a river "flowing to the sea" by way of Christchurch Meadows ; almost washing the foundations of that grand pile that should be the pride of



ST. PETER'S OAK.

Bournemouth, and is only another proof of the vigorous enterprise and resources of an age dead and gone.

To-day long reaches of mud and water developed themselves ; the country was much flooded ; and in all this mud and water cows were wading about up to their middle, apparently in as much bliss as if they had been pigs wallowing in the mire : until one speculated how, at nightfall, they would be fished out of this Slough of Despond. They were cropping the longer grass and the tall reeds ; but altogether it was rather a depressing spectacle. Up here, on the high and dry road, a certain sharpness in the air made one feel the value of a great coat and a warm rug : down there it must have been petrifying. But it may be that cows are insensible to such influences ; milk does not easily freeze in our larders ; and following out the idea, cows in their nature may be the reverse of Salamanders.

The sun had set long before we got back to our quarters, and a moon was riding proudly in the sky, bright and glittering in the frosty air. In the gathering gloom the trees of the forest looked dark and weird. Over long stretches of gorse and moorland we searched for deer and found them not. They had taken themselves to other haunts. We met and saw nothing on the road but our old friend, the charioteer, who, though he asked his way, evidently had not the slightest idea as to his destination. I never saw a man, off the water, so completely at sea.

A steep, fearful bit of hill, that every coachman shirks who can; the bane of mine host's life, and a serious detriment to him; which the surveyor of roads should report, and, if possible, see improved; but which our strong little horse took valiantly—and soon after we were at our journey's end. Closed shutters and drawn curtains, a warm, comfortable room, and a roaring fire changed the aspect of affairs and one's views of life.

The following Sunday morning I started with the intention of going to Minstead Church; but, missing the road, never saw Minstead Church that day. Turning presently a little to the left instead of to the right, I entered a long road skirted on either side by the forest. Nothing could be more beautiful. On either hand you obtained long views of the forest trees, their forms rising in all the beauty of shape and foliage, the latter bearing the rich tints of autumn. Glades and avenues opened up, ending in far-off depths that tempted one to forsake church, and roam about these wilds and solitudes. Yet I kept to the straight road which I now began to feel was the wrong one. But there was no turning back. Far down at the end might be seen something that looked like the commencement of a village: surely a church was not far off.

All the bracken in the wood had turned to gold and brown. The wild flowers of spring and summer had long disappeared; but small ferns and bright fungi, white and yellow and scarlet, and the red gladiolus grew under the shadow of the fronds. Birds, chirping and chattering, were flying from bough to bough, though few in number. The stillness was rather remarkable: a "Sabbath stillness" that seemed to fill the air, and almost made itself felt; until, going onwards, the distant sounding of a bell smote upon the ear, announcing that somewhere at least, and sometime, I should come upon a church.

Once a squirrel ran across the road, all grace, and beauty, and lightness; its bushy tail curled round, its little black, sharp eyes taking in the intruder as it ran up a friendly tree. And once I thought I heard the note of an owl hoot through the "long-drawn aisles" of the wood; but at this time of the day it was probably fancy. None of the youths and maidens one might have expected to see wandering from neighbouring villages were visible along the road. There was not a creature, and certainly not a sign-post (the forest is very deficient of the latter) to direct my going. But the distant vista at the end of

the lane had become less and less visionary ; until at length I came out upon an open space, a few cottages, an inn or two, a pond and a small green. But the last stroke of eleven had ceased to vibrate on the air, no church bell could now be heard, and, what was more, no church was visible.

Knocking at the nearest inn door—being Sunday and church time it was barred and bolted—it was opened by a pleasant-looking woman, who stared in some amazement at the enquiry as to whether this could possibly be the village of Minstead. I felt quite certain upon the point, but being more than ordinarily stupid in the matter of localities, it was safe and satisfactory to make assurance doubly sure.

"Minstead, sir!" cried the woman. "And you come from Stoneycross! Law bless me! Why, you've come miles out of your way. You ought to have turned to the right instead of coming down the hill. Well, you have had a walk. Though it's an uncommon fine day, to be sure. And I always do say that if you must lose your way, better do it on a fine day than a wet one."

Here the good woman paused for breath, and making the most of the opportunity to get in a word edgewise, I inquired for a church.

"*Church!*" returned the dame. "Oh, we've a church, sure enough. But you'll be awful late, sir. Anyhow, they'll let you in: and if you miss the prayers, why you'll be in time for the preaching. You might say the prayers to yourself, like, as you go along the road."

Another pause, and I looked about for the said church, but looked in vain. The woman saw my perplexity, and again came to the rescue.

"Oh, if you're peering for the church, sir, you'll peer long enough before you find it, leastways unless you're blessed with a crooked vision that can see round the corner. You bear to the left, here, and keep straight along the road; and by-and-by you'll come to the church at the top of the hill. It's a good mile from here."

"Your churches about the New Forest are for the most part at the top of a hill," I observed.

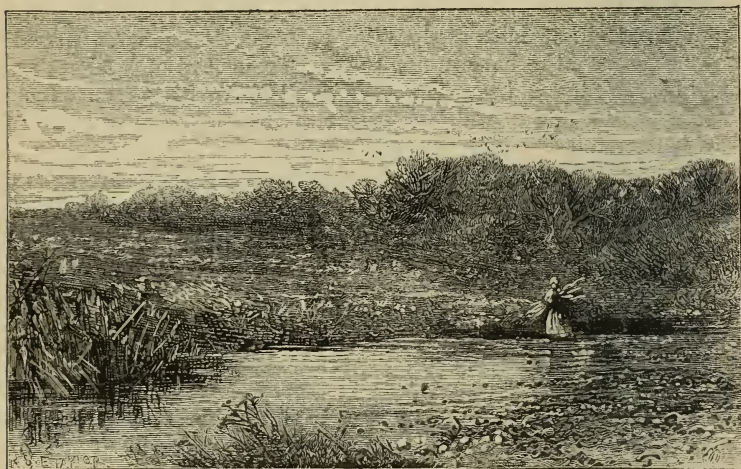
"Yes, sir," she answered, laughing; "I have heard the remark before, and I believe it's true. Well, it's uphill getting along in life, and I suppose they thought they'd give us a little of it in getting to heaven."

Thanking my comely, philosophical, but chattering guide, I went on my way rejoicing. Rejoicing in all the surrounding beauties of nature: the blue sky, the sunshine, the birds, the lights and shadows seen through the forest, forming, for the time being, an ideal existence: one of those walks, and mornings, and Sundays the remembrance of which comes across one in the after years with a certain sad pleasure lurking in all things long passed.

It certainly was "a good mile" to the church. I walked on and on, and still did not come to it; passed through the small village or

hamlet, with its usual number of idlers lounging about, hands thrust far down in pockets and gait slouching ; men—and some of them very young ones, too—whose happiness begins when the public-house doors are open, and whose lives are often wrecked in those turbid waters.

Then, in the distance, at the top of the hill, as the good woman had said, I saw the church : at length reached it. There was no difficulty about getting in, as she had observed : the difficulty rather, once in, was to remain there. The doors were open, the windows wide ; a keen wind swept down through the church with a searching and very disagreeable amount of resolution. Nevertheless, people, old and young, bore it with equanimity, as if ventilation came next to



IN THE NEW FOREST.

religion. For my own part, it came first that morning, and absorbed much of my thoughts. We were in a perfect whirlwind, which blew about the “tangled locks” of the assemblage with a mild attempt at the humorous and the grotesque. To anyone heated with quick walking (it was turned half-past eleven, and I had started at the Compton Arms at ten) there was some risk in gradually cooling down from fever heat to freezing point in the midst of this “patently” ventilated building.

I was surrounded by village rustics who bore it all with stolid fortitude. The church was small, quaint and primitive, and very uncomfortable—most uncomfortable ; but the preacher was earnest and his sermon was good, and he took for his text : “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of Man.” If everyone took it to heart that day, everyone must have been the better for it. Not by

eloquence is the heart of man reached, but by the power of earnestness.

The service over, there was a walk back to go through. But not twice in one day do we cull the same freshness of feeling from one and the same cause. If nothing else is different, the sky will be less bright, clouds will have gathered. And in many things we *never* again renew our first glowing impressions. The first press of the grape is the sweetest, the first draught of nectar the most satisfying. So the glow of early youth bears a charm and a romance no after happiness in life—not the full fruition of all our hopes and aspira-



A FOREST GLADE.

tions: they indeed, like the ashes of the Dead Sea fruit, too often turn to bitterness in the mouth—can ever possess.

The romantic stage survives but a short season, and then departs for ever. Let those who have it make the most of it; let them take their fill and dream their dreams. It can never return again, any more than we can live our life a second time. Happy those who have gone through the period with some satisfaction to themselves; however bitter the awakening, the after-life will ever be somewhat the brighter for it, for, no matter how distant the time, there will still be that halo of the past to cast over it a rose-coloured glamour; and there will be a self-administered reward in the ability to say: I have had my day.

The most crabbed and disappointed old age is frequently that which

has had least pleasure and happiness in life : as if, seeing existence slipping away and drawing to a close, its victims resented the withholding of their share of the phantoms so eagerly pursued : an *ignis fatuus* we call pleasure, which, alas ! too often proves but the empty bubbles of imagination.

This, dear reader, really looks like moralising. But if it be so you must pardon it, and put it down to the influence of the solitudes of the New Forest, through which we are rambling together : solitudes that are very real, and seem very persistent. For though I came out of the quaint church—refreshed in spirit, I hoped, unpleasantly refreshed in body, I did not doubt—with the small flock that composed the congregation : and though I saw them all before me, straggling down the road in groups and couples, as country people most love to walk—the wife just half a yard behind her liege—yet in a very short time every one of them had disappeared, and like Job's messengers, I found myself left alone to tell the tale. Perhaps because I had not Job's misfortunes to endure, Job's comforters did not appear.

Be this as it may, I gradually repassed all the little points on the road ; the splendid trees, the wealth of bracken, the glades and long vistas, where for great stretches you might see tree after tree raising itself in "pillared beauty ;" until, gaining the summit of the hill, stretching far down and away, was all the glorious mass, roll upon roll, wave on wave, of autumnal colouring. Down to the right stood Rufus's Stone, and beyond it the little village of Brook, where no doubt the impudent magpie was still hopping about and having it all its own way. And straight ahead—most welcome sight of all, perhaps—was the swinging sign of the Compton Arms, proclaiming to the world those comfortable quarters. Specially welcome just now, in that a frugal repast, ordered early in honour of the day, and out of consideration to the household, was overdue, and each moment might add to a great ruin.

But the little handmaiden was the culprit, and I had it out with her very seriously for inefficiently directing me in the morning. Upon which she could only reply that she thought I knew the road. Observing that people who knew the road did not as a rule ask—like Miss Rosa Dartle—for information, she seemed quite unable to grasp the logic of the reasoning, and the argument had to be abandoned.

After all, no harm had happened ; perhaps some good ; certainly the walk had been splendid this perfect autumn morning, with all the forest sights and sounds instinct with life ; a quietude and solitude refreshing and invigorating. But only a few out of the many will enter into the meaning of the last remark, and they not the happiest, perhaps, of earth's mortals, though the most hard-wrought. And if the meaning does not reach their comprehension, it cannot touch their sympathies. The divine gift of sympathy is first born within us : evidently it is not given to all : then it is brought into fruition in the furnace of affliction. I doubt if anyone ever possessed sympathy in

its full and perfect degree, who had not first suffered in almost equal proportion. Even then it is progressive. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

One night, darkness fell upon a green world ; as green, at least, as autumn tints permitted. The next morning, although the month was October, everyone was amazed to find the world white. Through the night the silent and unseasonable visitor had fallen thick and fast, and was falling still. Winter had come upon us with as much vengeance as rapidity. The change was startling, but it was almost difficult to decide which was the more beautiful of the two aspects ; the long waves of green and brown of yesterday, or the broad white carpet of to-day. Far as the eye could reach—an immense extent from this elevated ridge—stretched a dazzling white world, pure but cold as snow.

It seemed no time for prolonging one's sojourn in the New Forest. I felt inclined to pack up and depart. The old postman—that most popular of all public characters—when he arrived with the letters, said the snow was so thick upon the trees that branches were breaking in all directions with the report of small guns. But presently the snow ceased, the leaden sky rolled away, the sun came out with all the brightness it wears on such occasions. Improving the opportunity, I started for a long ride in company with my good host, without whose guidance I should quickly have gone astray in the mazes and thickets we proposed to explore. I was again mounted upon the little *Pride of the Forest*, and as he tossed his head, and snapped at the stirrups, and reared in the exuberance of his youthful spirits, it was evident that he meant to have his own share of fun and enjoyment out of the afternoon. The whiteness of the snow was exciting, and there was no subduing him.

We were bound for Mark Ash, almost the finest part of the New Forest : though where all is so beautiful comparison seems invidious.

It would be difficult to describe the wild grandeur of the wood after we entered within the bounds of Boldrewood and Mark Ash. Groups of trees, certainly larger and finer than any I had yet seen, surprised one by their wonderful and often grotesque forms. High above our heads, meeting like the Gothic arches of a cathedral, wide branches spread and blended together. Often we stood enclosed as by walls, in these natural temples, the trees standing out from each other in long and lovely aisles for a great distance, the sky but not the daylight completely shut out. Every branch was lined with snow ; everything was white and dazzling ; the barer branches ran in white veins, and clung and clasped each other like things of life. A white fretwork was above and around us. Branches, some of them large as small trees, lay prone upon the earth, borne down by the weight of the snow, and obstructing our path. Even as we stood, wondering silently at all this strange beauty, branches cracked and fell to the earth—as the old postman had said—with the report of small guns.

As for the path itself, well for us we were on horseback. Even the horses had some difficulty in getting through the oceans of mud and slush, that the melting snow was fast reducing to an impassable point. We came upon the charcoal burners' track and the watchman's hut, now half buried in snow; and admired their tact and taste and cunning in choosing the loveliest parts of the forest for their operations. Like the monks of old, who pitched their habitations in the densest but loveliest of solitudes, but where the eternal silence was sure to be disturbed by the flowing gurgle of a well-stocked trout stream, as a means to an innocent pastime and the plenishing of their larders: a crafty way of killing two birds—and such birds!—with one stone.

Some of the principal trees of the forest are known by their names: such as the Knyghtwood Oak, the King Oak, the Queen Oak, the Queen Bower Oak, the Twelve Apostles, and St. Peter's Oak. Of the Twelve Apostles, seven have departed this life; five only remain. The Knyghtwood Oak was a grand and gigantic fellow, lording it like a king far over his fellows. We had left the beaten track to get to it, and the snow and the bracken and the fallen branches cracked under the horses' feet with a crisp, sharp sound that in itself was a keen enjoyment. Falling back into the pathway we entered a long plantation of young firs. Here, indeed, for the first time, I was reminded of Norway, and went back in imagination to its pine-scented forests and torrent-swept valleys, its fjelds and its fjords, scenes very different from those through which we were now passing.

Soon after this we emerged from the wood, crossed a bridge spanning a stream, and came to the village of Emery Down. Huge logs of timber, trees that once had flourished in the forest and contributed their part to its beauty, were lying stripped of their bark and waiting to be transported. It was a picturesque, secluded spot. And here, because there were houses and inns at which one might ask to be directed, a sign-post lived and flourished with bold effrontery. In many other spots, where one's doubt and difficulties could not be satisfied, the sign-post was conspicuous by its absence.

And so, now keeping to the high road and rewarding the patience of our animals in wading through the wood, by good hard gallops, we gradually, at the end of about three hours, worked our way round again to our starting-point, the Compton Arms. It had been a glorious ride, full of the liveliest pleasure, and there are many such in the New Forest. I have but slightly touched upon its beauties, altogether passed over many a spot and many a place of note I was unable to visit on the occasion of that sojourn. But I think I have said enough to direct the reader's attention to this comparatively unvisited but most beautiful part of England.

As in all cases, fair weather, blue skies, and sunshine are necessary for the enjoyment and appreciation of the New Forest; but especially so here; for nothing is more depressing than the influence of trees

on wet or gloomy days. The very owls themselves will not then come out, but, seated in pairs on their perches, will, if molested, simply blink their eyes without stirring, and in their own weird but unmistakable language bid you begone from their realm. Then, as you politely move away in answer to their wish, they, half relenting, will throw after you, with long-drawn sigh and hissing breath, a grim but not unfriendly



"GOOD NIGHT!"



A VALENTINE.

WAKE, O my Love! the early dawn is creeping
Across the distant hills, with golden gleams.
How sweet must be the tenour of thy dreams,
Since thou, this happy morn, canst still be sleeping.
Beneath thy casement, where the ivy weeping,
With night-dews heavy, leans her head and sighs,
Stirred by the airs that kiss thy curtained eyes,
One faithful heart his lonely watch is keeping.
Since he impatient waits, O why delay?
I would be first this morn my Love to greet.
The white-robed snowdrops to the opening day
Proclaim with joy: "We hear her coming feet."
Like music to mine ears thy footfall light:
The sun has risen, and all the world is bright.

E. L.

THE CLOCK'S ROMANCE.

I SHOULD like to make one introductory remark—that I consider it a very serious thing to be a clock. It seems to me to be a responsible form of being, when I come to think what destiny may hang upon a single action of mine. I am the house clock at Martyr Hall.

I hope you will not laugh when I say that I do not know my age. It is true, however. What with marking the ages of people about me, when they enter the world and when they leave it, and with keeping time generally, I have had my hands fully employed; thus my own years have slipped out of my reckoning. That does not matter, you will think; and I had better go on with my story, first of all striking the hour which is at hand—

One-r-r-r, two-r-r-r, three-r-r-r, four!

I do not know any hour better than four o'clock for the telling of a story. At this hour the kitchen is quiet, the work of the morning being over, the work of the evening not yet begun: the family are probably out of the house, the servants dispersed for gossip. If you are in the hall, indeed, as I have been, and not in the kitchen—but I must get on, for the tale must be told before I strike five.

For many years now I have stood in the large, best kitchen of a fine old mansion; a mansion that had belonged for generations to a good old family: their name Martyr. It consists now of only mother and son, and just now they are both abroad.

The mistress, always called "my lady," is older in looks than in years; for she has ill health and an ill temper. A thorough woman of society in her day, she had gone through all the rounds of fashion and folly. Fretful, imperious, and restless, she could no longer stay content in any place; it was thought that something queer must ail her, either that she had secret troubles on her mind, or latent malady of body not yet developed. Suddenly, without any sort of cause, without an instant's warning, she would give orders to pack up, and off she would go on a journey towards some place near the end of the earth, as if it were only across the hills. She might return by the next week's steamer, her project cut short, or she might remain for a year, just as the whim seized her. Be this as it might, she never returned one whit improved in health or disposition; though she would come laden with curious things of ornament or use, and with her old head filled with new-fangled and outlandish foreign notions. Peace and harmony reigned in the house when my lady was absent; but when she came back to it she brought terror.

Sir Austin, the master, was my lady's only child, the son of her

second marriage, for she had wedded twice. Everybody liked him. There was not a trace of his mother in him, either in looks or disposition; he was his father over again; the grand, kindly Sir Anthony, who had died too soon. Sir Austin was thirty years of age now, just the handsome, grand-looking gentleman that Sir Anthony had been, gracious in manner, easy to be approached as a boy, his blue eyes genial, his fair waving hair taking a tinge of gold in the sunlight.

My lady was intensely fond and proud of her son, but in a selfish way; and he was not a bit happier in her society, and could not be, than anyone else was. The servants said—and if you want to hear how servants gossip and whisper and get to know everything, you should take up your abode in a kitchen clock-case—that things could never be quite straight between my lady and him, so long as he set his face against the wife she had imperiously carved out for him. This was one Miss Threthasis, who was a niece of her first husband. She declared he should marry none other than Alice Threthasis; he, so the servants thought, would rather go wifeless for ever than take her. Mrs. Threthasis was an invalid, nearly as peevish and exacting as my lady, and would hardly ever be left alone; otherwise her daughter would have been at the Hall for ever. Sir Austin was very patient and attentive to his mother, never quarrelling with her, taking all her complainings quietly, and attending her hither and thither as her capricious fancy dictated.

There were several servants in the house; that you will readily understand. The head and chief of them was Betsy, housekeeper now, my lady's own attendant in earlier days. To tradesmen and the younger servants she was "Mrs. Betsy," just as James Storm was "Mr. James." Betsy was older than her lady. She was a woman of good intelligence, mild disposition, and shrewd sense. A slim, neat figure was hers, and she had a fair face and pleasant but faded blue eyes. She wore a stiffly-ruffled cap with a broad ribbon about it surmounted by a large bow; a stuff dress, usually of dark green, made spare in the skirt and huge in the sleeve, a white frilled cape, a white apron, and high-heeled shoes. On Sundays her gown was of silk, black, and her cap of rich lace. A thick silver chain, on which were suspended the keys of the house, hung by her side always.

The head of the men-servants was James Storm: Mr. Storm out of doors; James, or Mr. James within. It was a peculiarity of the house that the servants were all called by their Christian name. He was the steward; and his duties seemed to lie in seeing people who came on business and in keeping the accounts. For years and years he had been in the family, even before Sir Anthony's time, and to him and Betsy there belonged a sort of romance. He had the sweetest temper I ever knew, was gentle and innocent as a lamb. In the evening, when duties were over, he would be Betsy's shadow. He had been in love with her in their youthful days. All the house knew it. It was a sort of everlasting courtship; and why they had

never married, was not to be guessed at : unless it was that my lady's imperious whims had stepped in to prevent it. To follow in Betsy's footsteps, to live in the light of her countenance, to sit close beside her in the evenings, this seemed to be all the ambition and desire of Mr. Storm. He was her *echo*, as well as her shadow ; let her say what she would, on any subject, he agreed with her, and repeated her words in full or in part. The amusing thing was, that he seemed to think her still in her youth ; she was to him just as he first saw her, a trim, pretty-faced girl, of quick parts and taking manners. " No, child," " yes, child," he would say to her even now. Perhaps years, in his own imagination, had stood still with him, and he was still the smart young steward of Sir Anthony, with an elastic tread and a flower in his button-hole : though he was indeed ten years at least older than Betsy.

The other servants need not be mentioned. The butler, Miles, was staid and elderly ; my lady's maid, Pheby, had seen nearly fifty years ; the cook, Rebecca, took a vast deal upon herself in the way of domineering, and in trying to keep the younger servants in subjection. Rebecca was the only one of the household who ever ventured to contradict my lady ; she did not seem to stand in fear of her.

Things were well-ordered in the house ; that's certain : I could tell, from having been before in an ill-ordered one. This was partly owing to my lady's exacting ways, partly to Betsy's system of management, partly to Rebecca's activity of body and tongue. During my lady's absences, rules and discipline were relaxed ; but no sooner did the post give notice of her return than things were called to order. And quickly, too ; for it often happened that the letter arrived one day, and my lady and Sir Austin the next. Then would be bustle. Every servant was brought up sharply to his and her duty, and made to feel they must do it. It was an anxious, not to say solemn time ; there was no laughing or playing over the work ; the maids could not chase each other with brooms, or talk to the gardeners from some upper window, flirting a duster coquettishly in their grimy hands.

Well, to go on. After nearly a year's respite, my lady and Sir Austin having spent a good part of that time in Rome, one of these warning letters was brought by the postman to the Hall. It was Easter weather ; bright and clear and tolerably warm. The travellers would arrive the following day, and Betsy set everybody on to clean and scrub. Brown holland coverings were taken off the furniture, lace and damask curtains were put up.

As the girls flitted about, talking over their work, I gathered that some excitement was up about Pheby. She and Miles always accompanied my lady and Sir Austin on their travels. Pheby had been ill in Rome, of a fever, it was said, but was getting better ; now, however, she was ill again, and it was doubtful whether she would not have to be left behind in Paris. Miles said that much in a few lines to James.

The grand whirl of commotion subsided towards the close of the

following day, and all was in readiness. James put on what gentlemen call evening dress, Betsy her black silk and lace cap, the maids their best bibs and tuckers. The large carriage, attended by its servants, went to the six-mile-off railway station, to await the travellers.

It was a wild night, dark as pitch: but, as Rebecca irreverently remarked, my lady generally did come home when the furies were abroad. Betsy reproved her, and held up her hand for silence. The wind swept in gusts over the hardened earth; then, gathering its strength, went soaring up on mighty wings towards heaven. James shivered, as if his clothes were thin for him, and drew a step nearer to Betsy.

"I wish you would listen," she said to the chattering maids, "I am almost sure I hear wheels."

"Wheels!" exclaimed James. "Why, so it is," he added, after a pause of silence. "The train must have kept its time for once."

"Perhaps it knew it had my lady in it," said Rebecca, in her hard way.

They trooped into the hall, leaving my kitchen door open, as the carriage came rolling up the avenue. The great doors were flung back, and the light streamed out upon it as it stopped.

"Fall into line on either side," said Betsy to the servants; and they fell back.

My lady's high, sharp voice was heard, heard before there had been time to let down the steps. "John, it is astonishing how slow you are! you always were so. Am I to stay in the carriage all night?"

She came sweeping in; looking neither to the right nor left; an imperious woman with a dark and sullen face. And she caught up the skirt of her travelling dress, as if she feared it might touch the gowns of the maids.

"Welcome home, my lady; welcome home, Sir Austin!" spoke James in his meek and somewhat quavering voice. "And I hope your travels have been pleasant to you, my lady," added Betsy. "Welcome home!"

"There! get out of the way; when do I have pleasant travels?" retorted my lady angrily.

How different was the young master's greeting—and how handsome he looked as he threw back the breast of his overcoat, and lifted his hat from his golden hair, and stretched out his hands to shake those of the steward and housekeeper.

"James, I am glad to see you again! Betsy, you look younger than ever. And how are you all?" turning his smiling face on the line of maids. "I have brought a little present for each of you."

"When you have finished detaining Betsy with your nonsense, Sir Austin, perhaps you will allow her to show me to my rooms," cried my lady sharply. "And I hope the dinner is ready, for I am very hungry."

"We are all hungry," smiled Sir Austin, as though he would, as

usual, throw oil on the troubled waters. "All three of us. As hungry as hunters."

Three! Three of them? Why yes, to be sure! That little figure cloaked and hooded, stepping in so quietly after my lady, was not Pheby. It was a young girl; a stranger. My lady, preceded by Betsy carrying two lighted candles in massive silver candlesticks, which had stood in readiness, halted on her way to the grand staircase, as she was passing one of the reception rooms, and caught sight of its blazing fire.

"Go in there," she coldly said, pushing the stranger into the room, and not very gently. "You cannot be of any use to me, as you are: and do not let me see your face again until you are warm."

"Oh, thank you!" returned the young lady in a grateful tone, and in the sweetest voice I ever heard. "How kind you are! I am truly very cold."

"Cold!" retorted my lady. "I have been made wretched for days past by your miserable shivering. It has distracted my nerves abominably."

"The climate is so different from ours," pleaded the girl softly. "When I am a little used to it, I shall not feel it so keenly."

My lady pointed imperiously to the fire, and swept on to the staircase. The girl knelt down in the blaze and held out two small gloved hands to the warmth. Presently Sir Austin went into the room; and James also, for his master was talking to him. Sir Austin smiled down at the kneeling figure: who looked but a child, though she was eighteen.

"What! still in your cloak and hood?" he said, pleasantly.

She smiled and rose up. "It is such a pretty fire!" answered she—"and oh, so welcome! I think I see pictures in it. I never before saw so great a fire."

"As a nation we glory in our generous fires," he answered, smiling. "But to enjoy it fully you ought to throw off your wrappings. Let me help you."

He unfastened the clasp of the cloak, and untied the white-lined hood; and she stood forth the prettiest creature, James declared afterwards, that he ever saw, her dress black, with a bit of white at the throat.

Small and slight was she, with a graceful form, and a sweet face that nearly took old James's breath away. The features were lovely; the red lips ever parting to show the small pearly teeth. Pale generally, a bright crimson flashed into the cheeks with nearly every word. Her eyes were large and dark and soft, and her dark brown hair was beautiful. A delicate, refined girl altogether, with a gravity beyond her years, and a sweet, patient expression of face.

"Ours is a cold but not an unkindly climate," continued Sir Austin. "Of course you will feel it greatly after your own; but in time I hope you will learn to like it."

"Oh yes," she earnestly answered. "It is so kind of Lady Martyr to have brought me—I would not be ungrateful to her for the world."

But she could not help shivering. "James," said the master, turning to him, "I think this young lady would be the better for a little hot wine and water before dinner. Will you get it? It was bitterly cold on board the boat and all the way down here in the train: and the wind to-night is keen and wild."

He placed a low chair for her before the fire, standing up himself, and James soon took in the wine and water, and a biscuit with it. Close upon that, my lady's bell rang sharply for the young lady to go up to her.

She did not come down to dinner, it was said. Sir Austin asked where she was, as he gave his arm to his mother, and my lady curtly answered that she preferred to stay shivering over her bed-room fire. Sir Austin knitted his brow at that, and the servants saw it.

"Who is she?" questioned Rebecca of Miles, when they were in the best kitchen, after the dinner was over.

"As nice a little lady as you'd wish to see," answered Miles, who was the most talkative of the men-servants. "Her father was some high-born Italian; he spent his patrimony on his country, and died fighting for it. His wife was English, high-born, too, and she and the daughter were left without fortune. They had to let their old villa to live, and took up their abode in a sort of summer-house in the grounds. My lady and Sir Austin hired the villa, and that's how they became acquainted with them."

"Oh," said Rebecca. "And who is it that the young lady is wearing black for?"

"Her mother. She died a month ago. My lady had got very intimate with them, and she promised the mother to take the young one as a companion."

Rebecca was sitting down by the fender on the iron stool they call a "footman." She stared at Miles. "That's an odd thing for her to do; isn't it?"

"Well, you see, in talking together, the two old ladies found out they were related in some distant way: connected, at any rate; and I think my lady took a fancy to Miss Carlotta at first: Charlotte, you know, it spells in English. Yes, a wonderful thing for *her* to do."

Rebecca nodded her head. "Look here, Miles; she comes home cantankerous enough at all times, as we have cause to know; but she is worse this time than ever. What has put her out?"

Miles did not answer.

"Now then, can't you speak?" cried Rebecca, flying into a contrary mood. "Are you going to deny that she came in upon us in a way just unbearable, not fit for a Christian?"

"She has been so all the way from Paris," said Miles. "How the master bears with her—and he that patient—is beyond me. Pheby

thinks something must be amiss with her health ; leastways, she hinted as much."

"Something amiss with her temper," corrected Rebecca.

"To begin with, she had a scene with Pheby in Paris," went on Miles. "Pheby crossed her in some way : and for nothing in the world, as she told me, but that she asked my lady to see a French doctor. My lady was quite violent. It upset Pheby, and the next morning her fever was back again, and she had to be left behind at the hotel. Sir Austin would have stayed on there, but my lady insisted upon travelling all the same. Then he proposed that she should engage a maid to attend her on the journey in Pheby's place. My lady refused, saying she should make Miss Donati her maid until Pheby was about again. Sir Austin was angry. 'Surely you cannot think of doing anything of the kind, mother !' said he. 'I could not permit it ; Carlotta is our guest, our more than equal.' My lady flared out at that, and called him names ; and she has been fit to snap all our heads off ever since."

"She seems a sweet, dear young lady," interrupted Betsy, who had come in while Miles was speaking. "So grateful for any little thing done for her ! She was crying bitterly over the fire when I went into her room after my lady went down to dinner ; but she smiled up at me in a pretty way, and dried her tears, as if to excuse herself, saying she felt strange just at first in a new country, and had but recently lost her dear mother. 'How good you are to me !' she said, in her sweet, childish voice ; for I had knelt down to rub her poor, chilled limbs. 'I shall feel happier when I get warm. The light and heat are blessed things.'"

"You can't help liking her," said Miles. "And my lady has been that nasty and snappish with her all the way over that — I know what I know," he added, dropping his voice, as though he thought the walls might be alive with ears ; "and that is, that the master is in love with the pretty girl and means to show it."

"Then the fat will be in the fire," nodded Rebecca.

My lady had found fault with Miss Donati for feeling chilly on the journey, but she caught a cold herself. The next morning she did not get up, and Betsy feared she was going to be very ill. Anyway, she was very angry : she was not used to be ill with colds. Sir Austin wanted to send for the doctor, who lived but a mile from the park gates, but my lady forbade it. She hated doctors, she said ; most of them were nothing but incompetent pretenders, and she should recover sooner without old Fall than with him.

By night she was so ill as to be, Betsy thought, in danger, and Sir Austin took it upon himself to act. Thomas drove off in the dog-cart, and brought back Dr. Fall.

"So far as I can judge, the lungs are inflamed, but she will not let me examine her," he said to the master when he came down from the chamber. "My lady was always addicted to taking her own way, Sir Austin."

Nobody knew that better than Sir Austin. The doctor ordered a blister, and told Betsy how and when it was to be put on. My lady flung the blister back in Betsy's face when it came, and would not have it on.

She continued very ill in bed, very ; owing, said the servants amid themselves, to the want of proper remedies. Sir Austin had got the doctor to send in a sick nurse, and my lady refused to see her. She would have only Betsy near her, nobody else. For two weeks even Sir Austin was hardly let go into the chamber ; at the end of that time she got a little better, and would let Miss Donati read to her for an hour daily in a book of her own soft Italian tongue, which my lady spoke as a native. But she did not get out of bed yet. However, danger was over, and the anxiety of the household relieved.

The beautiful May weather came in ; the sun was shining and the flowers were blossoming. Miss Donati ran about in the warmth, out of doors, light as a bird. Released from the ill-temper of my lady, she was happy as a fairy princess.

"I shall like this climate always when it is warm as this," she said one day to Sir Austin, as he met her coming in, and her soft dark eyes were sparkling, and her cheeks blushing. His answer was too low for me to hear ; but his blue eyes smiled back into hers, and he drew her little hand within his arm, and led her back to the pleasure gardens again. What Miles had said was true : Sir Austin loved her, and meant to let the world know it.

With my lady up, and my lady in bed, things were widely different. Sir Austin was master now, in fact, as well as in name. Every word of his, every little wish was implicitly obeyed by the servants. They would have liked to obey him always had they dared.

"While I am confined to my room here, Miss Donati will sit in your parlour," my lady had said to the housekeeper the first day she was in bed. "Do you hear, Betsy ? She is not to use our own rooms at all ; she is to confine herself to your parlour, and her meals must be served there."

Betsy heard fast enough ; but Betsy was not allowed to carry out the order. Sir Austin interposed his veto.

"My mother must have spoken without reflection : or else you failed to catch her meaning," he said to Betsy. "Miss Donati is a young gentlewoman of high birth ; she must be treated with perfect consideration. She will be my especial guest, sit with me until my mother shall be with us again : in fact, occupy the place that my sister would, if I had one. You have heard, perhaps, that some of my mother's relatives are Miss Donati's relatives ?"

"It seems a vast deal more proper, Sir Austin, that the young lady should be your companion than mine," was Betsy's answer. "But what will my lady say if she finds her orders disobeyed ?"

"I think, Betsy, that while your lady is ill it will be best not to

trouble her with any kind of contradiction. You can let her suppose that her orders are carried out."

So there was a pretty plot! My lady in bed, not allowed to hear secrets, Sir Austin master and taking his own will. "When the cat's away, the mice will play," said Rebecca, looking as if she would like to dance.

I suppose you don't forget that I am the clock; and that all clocks require to be wound up. I was wound up always by James Storm. Every other Monday at mid-day, as regularly as every other Monday came round, he brought forward the low chair and stood on it to wind me. And on this Monday that I now tell of, which was ten or eleven days after the coming home of my lady, he was about to step on the wooden chair, when the kitchen door opened and Betsy stole in from my lady's room, looking horribly frightened and as white as a ghost.

"What is the matter?" asked James as she staggered to the red-cushioned arm-chair.

"Oh, James! Oh, James!" she gasped. "I—I—" and then she went into a fit of hysterics, sobbing one minute and laughing the next.

"No—no, don't call anybody," she managed to jerk out as he was turning away for assistance. "I shall be better presently. I have had a shock, James; a dreadful fright—and I dare not tell of it."

"But you can tell it to me, Betsy."

"No, not even you. I dare not. Oh!" she shuddered, "what an awful thing, what an awful thing."

There was a cupboard in the best kitchen corner, in which Rebecca kept some cherry brandy. James got a bottle of it down and poured a spoonful or two into a wine-glass. As Betsy sipped it she became a little easier, only crying quietly.

"I cannot explain anything, James; I can't indeed. I—I've got to know of a most dreadful secret, a *fatal* secret, and—oh dear, I think it will kill me!" she broke off. "How shall I live on, and keep it?"

"A fatal secret!" repeated James. "Does it concern Sir Austin?"

"It concerns us all," she answered, trembling and shaking. "Oh, what are we to do! What are we to do!"

"But *why* can't you tell me? We are both grey-haired now, Betsy, you and I, and we have been tender friends and companions ever since our locks were bright and our steps elastic; and I ask you—why?"

"*I dare not*," she said impressively; "my lady would kill me if I told. Besides, she has sworn me to secrecy."

James was beginning to tremble too. "Does Sir Austin ——"

"Hush!" cried Betsy, as a clatter was heard outside; "some one is coming in. You must forget that I have mentioned this, James."

"Why, what's the matter now?" exclaimed Rebecca, stalking in upon them in her pattens, for she was helping the scullery-maid to clean. "Betsy whiter than her apron, and my cherry brandy got at!"

"Mrs. Betsy was feeling a bit faint," said James ; "I reached down the cherry brandy for her."

"Faint ! and no wonder," cried Rebecca ; "stewed up, as she is, all day and night in my lady's sick room ! I should strike ; I know that."

Betsy rose and left the kitchen, her steps halting. Rebecca put up the cherry brandy, and James got on the chair and wound me up with shaking fingers. I wondered what ill it was that was coming upon the house.

A day or two after this, when the window near me stood open to the warm sunshine, I happened to strike the hour—eleven—just as Sir Austin and the young lady passed. She turned her head quickly and looked in.

"What a fine sound that clock has in striking, so deep and melodious," she exclaimed in her pretty accent that seemed to be softer than ours, as if a touch of her own sweet Italian tongue mingled with it.

"It is a fine old clock altogether," observed Sir Austin. "Come in and look at it, Carlotta."

She came in through the side door with him, and stood in front of me ; the kitchen being empty just then. What a lovely face it was, raised to mine.

"It is too handsome to be here," she said. "I declare the case is of carved ebony. It ought to be in the hall, Sir Austin."

"It shall be sometime," returned the master, looking down at her with the love shining in his dark blue eyes. "It, and all things else, shall be placed wheresoever you like best, Carina."

As they turned away, a great tide of crimson flushed her cheeks. Ah ! it was easy to be seen how the wind blew. And my lady, up in her bedroom, suspected not the treason that was abroad.

June was coming in before she quitted it, to stir the house with her sharp commands. Her bell would ring ten times at once, the maids flying all ways to answer it. Up and down, here and there and everywhere, went she, in her pink cashmere dressing-gown, a fantastic French cap upon her head that made her look all the uglier.

The day that my lady took up her place again in the drawing-room after her long illness—in a trailing velvet dress and the rings glittering on her fingers—Sir Austin left the Hall. News had come that something was amiss with my lady's sister-in-law, Mrs. Threthasis ; they did not know whether it was illness or trouble ; and my lady ordered Sir Austin off to Cornwall.

"Is it necessary that I should go, think you, mother ?" he asked in Betsy's hearing, who was busy about her mistress. "I cannot see what trouble she can have : and if it be sickness, I can do no good in a sick-room." My lady answered that it was necessary, and he must lose no time in starting. So he went off in the dog-cart to the station.

That same evening Pheby came home. She was thin and pale, and her hair was cut short. She and Betsy began at once to hold conferences together in whispered tones and with grave faces. It struck me that Betsy was disclosing to her what she had not dared disclose to James—the fatal secret.

Two days later the postman brought two letters to the house: one for my lady, one for Miss Donati, and both of them from Sir Austin. What my lady's contained she and he only knew, but when she read it she was like a mad woman.

"Never," she screamed out, with a vehemence that made Pheby start, "never! I would see her die first."

She rushed down stairs after reading the letter, to the breakfast-room, where Miss Donati waited. What happened none of the servants could say; there was a commotion inside, my lady raving, stamping, and storming; and then the poor young girl, looking frightened to death, came running forth all in a tremble, with a wound in her cheek.

"She has struck her with her heavy hand, and at times it's as sharp as a dagger," whispered Pheby to the housekeeper.

What an uncomfortable day it was! My lady in her raging mood, the poor young foreigner hiding her cheek and her tears in her chamber, locked in by my lady's orders, and the servants pretty nearly in rebellion. My lady was on the eve of madness, they said to one another; she would strike a deadly blow next, and it might be to one of them.

That night there was a mysterious departure from the house. The closed carriage came quietly to the house at ten o'clock, and two veiled women stole down the stairs, and were driven quietly off in it: it was my lady's maid with a prisoner in charge, Miss Donati.

For some of the servants that night there was no bed. But not on account of the departure. For several days James Storm had been ailing, and this night he died.

After the whispering amid the servants had passed away, consequent on the departure of the carriage, James came into the kitchen, and drew the old arm-chair right before the blazing fire, as though the fire in his own sitting-room did not give out enough warmth; and certainly the kitchen fire, summer and winter, blazed away with a roaring heat. His face looked whiter than Rebecca's jelly-bag. Betsy, coming in, noticed it.

"Do you feel worse to-night, James?" she said.

"I think I am going," he whispered.

"Oh, don't say it!" she cried, after a startled pause. "Oh, my dear old friend, is there anything I can do for you?"

The change seemed to be coming fast. Betsy held his hand. She would have sent one of the men for the doctor, but he stopped her.

"Nobody can do anything for me in this world," he said. "The Lord above knows what is best, and He has called me."

She was crying silently. "Oh, James, I fear I have been often impatient with you," she said; "but I meant well, I did indeed. *Can't* I do anything for you before we part?"

"I think not," he answered, his speech getting more feeble. "I would have been glad to be put at rest about that dark secret, for it has troubled my mind much; Sir Austin was always dear to me. But it does not signify now: the uneasiness has passed away."

She bent close to his ear, and whispered. It aroused the fleeting spirit; he sat up in his chair. "What?" he cried.

"Yes, it's that," said Betsy.

"The Lord be merciful to her!" he aspirated, clasping his hands in supplication.

Betsy bent forward as his head fell back again; she kissed his withered lips.

"Perhaps it might have been happier for you had we married, James. We have been happy as it is, always being together, always pleasant one with the other; but—perhaps—your life might have been a more contented one had we married. Dear James!"

Once more she kissed him. It was all she could do now: and it satisfied him. A smile passed over the pale old face, beautifying it strangely: and, still holding Betsy's hand, James Storm's eyes quietly closed as he entered into that better place where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; where it will be face to face and heart to heart, without the dimming, mystifying veil between.

The next evening saw the return of Sir Austin; and he held a private conference with his mother before he slept. It was as stormy a one as she could make it. His voice was heard, low, firm, uncompromising; hers full of a raging tempest that melted at last into sobs.

"You have learnt to love her!" shrieked my lady. "How dared you?"

"I don't think there was much 'learning' in it, mother," he answered. "I have loved her from the first hour I saw her; I shall love her always."

"You shall never marry her."

"I beg your pardon. I have obeyed you in all essential things, mother; I wish to obey you still; but I must choose my wife myself."

"Alice shall be your wife, and no other."

"I told you, but that you were too angry to hear me, that Alice is to marry a Cornish man, as her father was. You may put her out of your thoughts so far as I am concerned. Her mother is angry, but she is resolved. I should never have married Alice under any circumstances, and I am sorry you have been so unwilling to believe it."

"She has three hundred thousand pounds."

"Yes, those Cornish miners know how to bag the gold. Carlotta has nothing, I perceive you are going to say, mother; and it is true, but I have quite enough for her and for me."

Not until the next morning did he find out that Miss Donati was missing. How he would have acted, or what he would have done, was not known, for the house was in too much commotion with other matters. He first learnt then that James Storm, the true and faithful steward of his father and himself, the meek and gentle man, was gone. He learnt also that the house contained a secret—that which Betsy had called a fatal one; which she had whispered into the ear of James when he was dying.

The angry passions of my lady, acting upon her previous bodily weakness, had brought on illness; Betsy called it an "attack." She lay insensible on her bed; Dr. Fall was sent for; and then the secret was discovered and had to be declared. Truly it was fatal in its nature.

My lady was suffering from a dreadful malady which she had been concealing. Its ravages were eating away her heart-strings. She had made no sign, preferring to suffer in silence. Betsy had discovered it accidentally: Pheby had known of it for months, and had angered her lady in Paris by begging her to see a doctor. A very, very little span of life, at most but a week or two, could remain to her now. So there was a fine household for Sir Austin to wake up to this morning: his valued old servant dead, his mother dying.

With the discovery acting on her mind, and this new attack upon her body, and the certainty of the speedy death that was staring her in the face, my lady changed. The haughty, self-willed, passionate woman became silent and subdued.

"It's mostly the case with them wicked ones," affirmed Rebecca. "But for their conscience stepping in to prick 'em towards the end, they'd die in their evil. The Lord sends His chastening to these black sheep to save 'em."

She let Sir Austin know where Miss Donati was, and let him telegraph to Pheby to bring her back. It was evening when they arrived. The poor, pale, pretty child crept in shrinking and trembling, her hand covering her cheek. A shudder caught Sir Austin's strong frame as he drew away the unwilling hand and saw the bruise.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried out, "how can I make it up to you?"

"Why have you sent for me back again?" she shivered. "I dare not stay here."

"Yes," he fondly whispered, kissing the tears away, "you will stay here for ever—so long as time, with us, shall last."

Well, she *was* changed—that imperious lady of ours. Far from opposing their marriage now, she urged it on; went into a fever of impatience lest it should not take place soon enough. That is, lest she should not live to see it. A special licence was procured; and the clergyman of the parish came to the Hall, and married them by my lady's bedside.

"I could not leave her here unprotected after my death," she said

to the priest, as if in apology. "Her mother was my friend and relative."

Hot weather is abroad still, though partridge shooting begins to-morrow. My lady has been in the churchyard two months now, under a white marble tombstone that sets forth her virtues, and the maids wear black bows in their caps. Betsy has another to mourn for besides my lady, and sadness sits in her faded eyes.

Commotion is setting in again, supervening upon the quiet of the last few weeks. Brooms and mops and dusters, and women's tongues, are nearly as busy as they were in my lady's time, for some visitors come to the house to-night for a week or two—my young Lady Martyr's relatives, Lord and Lady Etcherley, distantly related also to Sir Austin.

As to myself—well, they have not moved me into the hall, as my young lady once suggested. The servants said I had been with them so long that they should be "lost" without me, I was like an old friend to them: and as my young lady listens to all their wishes, and is as solicitous to give happiness as my lady was to give torment, I am to stay in the old place, the hall-kitchen. Sir Austin——

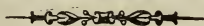
There! I have given warning to strike. Time for only a few more words remains to me. To say that, puts me somewhat in mind of death: when *he* gives warning, time is all but over.

And here come Sir Austin and my young lady into the private garden before my open window. How girlish she looks, in her thin black summer dress, and the happy bloom upon her bright face. They are going to run a race down the broad walk. Sir Austin gives her half the distance and wins by a length, in a burst of merry laughter: his legs are long and active.

"You have lost, Carina," he says, "and you must pay forfeit;" and, with that, he turns her face upwards. She pretends to hide it from him; to be coy; but the master is the stronger, and he brings it close to his own, and takes the kiss from her ruby lips. She——

I am going to strike! Alas, alas!

One-rrr, two-rrr, three-rrr, four-rrr, five!



WHAT HAPPENED.

A PRETTY white cottage standing back from the road within its large plot of garden, wherein cluster beds of sweet-scented, homely flowers, woodbine and clematis creeping about the porch. The window of the little square parlour opening to the ground ; seated in the window, darning a man's cotton sock, a young girl with a pleasant face, smooth brown hair, and dark grey eyes ; and over all, shining and sparkling, the golden rays of the hot summer sun. It was a fair, peaceful picture.

Rather too peaceful in its monotony for Katie Denison. She had been George Denison's wife nearly four months, and she found the home life in the cottage just a wee bit lonely, especially to-day. For the little maid-servant, Jane, had been sent for to the next village at daybreak, her mother being taken suddenly ill, and was not to be back before night. George's own occupation lay in the town, Redland, a mile away. Sometimes he got home to mid-day dinner, sometimes not ; and though he ought to have been home every evening at six, it happened as often as not that he was kept an hour or two after it. A hard-worked clerk was he, not too well paid ; but they were both young and healthy and buoyant, content to work on patiently and cheerfully for the days when money might be more plentiful. On this day George had not come in to dinner, and Katie, maid as well as mistress for the time being, had taken her own in solitude, cleared things away, done Jane's work generally, and then sat down to her sock-mending. The bees hummed lazily in the outer air, the clock on the mantel-piece ticked on drowsily, and the afternoon was passing.

"Oh dear, how lonely it all is !" groaned Katie, quite overpowered by the monotony around. "Who would have thought that Jane's absence could make such a difference ? It must be the *consciousness* of being alone that's telling upon me : Jane, shut up in her kitchen, is no more of a companion to me other days than she is to-day over at Bestley. I do wish something would happen !"

"All days here are lonely enough, for that matter," went on Katie, after a pause, "so different from home, with the eight of us in it. It is only the same routine over and over again : the housework to be seen to, and the bread to make, and the meals to get, and then the sitting down in the afternoon to mend or make, or knit or net. Of course it is not George's fault ; he would be with me always if he could : but it is a shame of that wretched office not to let him come home to dinner !" And here Katie paused to thread her needle, and the clock struck the half-hour.

"Only half-past four ! An hour and a half yet to tea-time ! If I

had but only a little bit of sociable life!—many others have. Is it always the same for young wives, I wonder?—but I don't feel quite like this when Jane is in the house. She is a silly thing, though well-meaning, but she is company. I wish we could go travelling, I and George! I wish some nice neighbours lived at the end of the garden! I wish a carriage would come along now, and break down opposite the gate, and somebody be hurt and have to come in and rest awhile. No chance of that, however, in this lonely, cross-cut way I wish it was the high road! If only a beggar woman came along, it would be something!”

And Mistress Kate Denison looked up to groan.

“I wish someone would leave us a fortune, or write me a long letter, or send me a present, or anything! I'd not care what, if only *something* would happen. If a misfortune came, it would be something. I wish it would!”

It was a reckless wish. The clock heard it and ticked more solemnly than ever; the roses waving by the open window heard it, and breathed forth their sweet fragrance. The roses might have had a tale to tell, could she have understood them.

“I am tired of the sunshine, there's so much of it,” decided Katie. “I am tired of the flowers, and the shrubs, and the hedge that hides the road, and of the green gate. George fancies this home is perfection; because he was always in it, he forgets its loneliness. I do wish something would happen, good or bad—yes, *bad*.”

There was a curious hush all through the little parlour; to Katie it never seemed so still before. Even the beating of the clock had an ominous sound. What a wish it was—“something good or *bad*!” Did Katie forget the great exciting things that might happen at any minute if Providence did not hold them back? In what a brief second the ground opens and an earthquake devastates the land; in a breath the destroying hurricane comes, or the storm at sea, and sweeps homes and ships and lives away. The clouds may gather silently and the lightning fall and pierce the heart of one near and dear to us. Strange and unforeseen calamities may indeed overtake us unwarily, and make even death seem desirable.

Katie did not take back her wish, for she gave no thought to these dark things. She rolled up her husband's socks, and went to stand at the open window, regarding the pleasant garden discontentedly. Her dress was a fresh, bright gingham, with pink dots upon it, over which she wore a black silk apron with pockets and tassels.

“I have a great mind to move that rose bush!” she cried presently, after glancing about the garden. “I have been going to do it for ever so long—why not do it now? I suppose it will bear transplanting, and grow here as well as there? Any way, I'll risk it—and it will serve to pass away this most dreary afternoon.”

Katie put on her garden hat, for the sun was burning and blazing, and got the spade and hoe. A lovely moss rose tree, covered with

the sweetest buds and blossoms, bloomed in an obscure corner of the garden ; she wished it to be before the window instead.

She went to the corner and began her work. At last, with a great pull, up came the bush, and Katie stood to take breath, flushed and triumphant.

"I wonder if the rose tree has been wishing something to happen to it?" she thought, laughing. "It is going to be placed where it can see the world now ; I'm sure it could not see it there."

Pausing thus and thinking what a great hole the taking it up had made, Katie's eyes caught sight of something that seemed to shine. She thought it must be her silver thimble dropped out of her apron pocket, and stooped to pick it up. But it was not her thimble ; it was something that resisted her grasp.

Clearing away the earth from around it, she found at length that it was a box with brass-bound corners : a mahogany box, or desk, that had been buried there. With the help of the spade, and with some trouble, Katie got it out of the ground. It was neither very large nor very heavy, and she carried it into the house and placed it on the table, interposing a newspaper to save the green cloth from the mould.

"What can it possibly be ? who can have put it there ? and what **can** be in it ?" she wondered in excitement. "If I had but a key to fit the lock !"

But, upon regarding the lock attentively, she saw that it was a very simple one, and that the fastenings could easily be pushed back with a pen-knife. Another minute, and the desk lay open before her.

Some silver tea-spoons wrapped in wash-leather first met her sight ; they were antique and massive, and discoloured. Eleven of them, and a pair of sugar-tongs, and a caddy spoon : all marked "A. D."

Recollection flashed through Katie. She had heard the story more than once from George. Some years before, his Aunt Ann, his father's sister, who lived at the cottage here with the family, took a sudden panic. She was left in the house alone, her brother with his wife and son being away on a week's visit, when there arose a rumour of sundry burglaries in the neighbourhood, in one or two cases accompanied by violence. Miss Denison, very much frightened, wrote word of this to her brother, entreating him to return, and adding that she had meanwhile hidden her property in a safe place. That same night the cottage was broken into, and Ann Denison was so terrified that she had a seizure. Already in failing health, she never rallied from it ; though she lived for a time, she did not recover proper speech or proper consciousness ; her mind was gone. She died ; and when her will was opened it was found that she had left what property she possessed to her nephew, George, unconditionally.

But no property was to be found. It was supposed that she had, or ought to have had, over two hundred pounds, which she had always kept in the house with her, being afraid of banks and all other securities. It had disappeared, together with her silver spoons—on

which she set much store—her desk, and some personal ornaments. Either she had too effectually hidden it, or else the robbers had run away with it. Gradually the family came to the conclusion that the latter must have been the case.

But as Katie Denison opened her eyes on this wonderful treasure disinterred from the earth, she saw what it was: the lost desk and property. "The Aunt Ann must have dug a hole, and put in the desk and planted a rose tree over it!" said Katie to herself, her nimble fingers busy. "Eleven spoons—I remember George said one of them had been lost or stolen years before; and how beautiful they are!"

After the spoons, wrapped in more leather, two brooches came to light, and two pairs of ear-rings to match, the one set real pearls and amethysts, the other, garnets set in gold. Beside them lay a beautiful necklace of pink coral. And the greatest treasure of all was in a drawer to itself: a packet of bank notes, securely folded in a water-proof case that kept them from the air.

Katie Denison, after some hesitation, timidly ventured to count them: twenty-four notes of ten pounds each, making two hundred and forty pounds.

Her breath came and went unevenly as she gazed at them—lying on the table beside the spread out jewels. Oh, what a boon it was! No more pinching for herself and George, no more looking at every sixpence before they dared spend it, no more almost fifty per cent. interest to be paid on the hundred pounds borrowed by George's father, and which had kept them, the young beginners, down. The debt itself could be paid off now. Katie lifted her hands and her heart on high in thankfulness. But she was interrupted.

"Good day, my lady! Good day!"

Mrs. Denison started as though she had been shot. Turning to the window, whence the salutation came, she saw a dark, wiry man, with long black hair and keen eyes, standing there, a box strapped upon his back. He was evidently a travelling pedlar. Whipping off her black silk apron, she flung it over the notes and the glistening ornaments, and shut down the lid of the desk, but leaving it exposed to view.

The pedlar coolly stepped inside the room, unstrapped his pack, and began to open it. He did not glance at all towards the table, and Katie hoped he had not seen what was on it. Pedlars were not uncommon visitors in the rural districts, and she had never known them otherwise than well-behaved and honest. Still, the shining jewels might be a temptation.

"The sun's very hot to-day, my lady," he remarked, sociably but quite respectfully, "and we travellers get full benefit of it, especially with a load like this to toil under."

"Yes, it is very hot indeed," civilly replied Katie.

The pack was thrown open at last, displaying all kinds of things: buttons, sewing silk, ribbons, handkerchiefs, imitation lace neck

collars, cheap jewellery, scent bottles, and many other articles calculated to take the eye of inexperienced country girls and women.

"What will you buy, lady?"

"I do not want anything, thank you, to-day," said Katie, politely, not daring to be otherwise.

"Nay, but I am sure a pretty young lady like you must need something. Look at these gloves—real French kid, and only fourteenpence a pair. Dirt cheap, my lady; you'd pay three-and-sixpence at the town drapers'."

"Not to-day, thank you. I have no money to spend. We are only poor people."

The pedlar glanced at the pretty room, as much as to say that it seemed to be a contradiction to the last assertion. However, he only went on to laud his wares. "These breastknots, my lady, and the hair bows? see this sapphire—blue set, blue as a fair lady's eyes. Won't it tempt you?"

"No; nothing at all to-day," repeated Katie, shaking her head.

"Any jewellery, lady? See, I have in this side case a few choice rings, bracelets, and brooches. Look at these yellow topaz ear pendants! don't they sparkle again in the sunlight? Only look, my lady."

Katie advanced a step or two from the table, before which she had been standing as if to guard it, and did look. Such pretty ear-rings they were, long shining pendants, flashing in the pedlar's brown fingers; as pretty as those underneath her apron. But she wanted them not. The rings were lovely: being a daughter of Eve, she would have liked some of them.

"Thank you, I cannot buy," said she, slowly. "I have very little money in my purse to-day; none to spend on pretty things."

The pedlar turned over his goods with undiminished cordiality. "I do not charge for showing my things, and ladies like to look at them, although they may not want to buy. Look at these little bottles of perfume; cologne water, lavender, violet. And only sixpence each."

The bottles were extremely pretty, and Katie loved perfumes. Perhaps she might spare a sixpence for one of them. As she caught one up, the pedlar took the glass stopper out of another, poured some drops of its contents on Katie's handkerchief, which lay on an easy chair close by, and held it to her face.

"Jessamine, my lady. Do you like it?"

"Oh, it is delicious," cried Katie, sniffing at it. "Only sixpence each, you say; I think I must have this."

The pedlar laughed pleasantly, and tossed back his long black hair from his tawny face. "I thought you'd be tempted by the scents, lady. Why, the beautiful little bottles are alone worth the money. Better take a pair of them: this is rose."

"Nothing more, to-day," she answered decisively, giving him the sixpence. And the pedlar made a comical feint of yielding in despair.

Familiar though he seemed to be, his manner had not lost one atom of its respect.

"Then I conclude I may strap up my pack again," he said, beginning to put the things straight in it. "If you would but be tempted to a knot of ribbons, or a pair of these delicate gloves! Stay, though; here's a rare perfume—my lady has a love for perfumes, I see!"

"Indeed I have," said Katie, who had never ceased to smell at her jessamine. "But I cannot buy any more."

"I don't ask you to buy this," he answered, producing a larger bottle of curiously-carved glass, which appeared to be filled with a colourless liquid. "This is a very rare and costly perfume, that I never offer for sale save to customers whose purses are as deep as their wishes. Has my lady ever heard of the attar of roses from India, worth a guinea a drop?"

Katie opened her eyes in surprise. "A guinea a drop! And is this attar of roses?"

"No, this is not; but it is a perfume as costly. Smell it, my lady; take a good deep breath over it. You've not often smelt *this*."

He held the bottle under her nose; and she, preparing for a pleasurable sensation, inhaled a long breath of it. Why, what a strange, sweet, penetrating odour it had! But not exactly an agreeable one, Katie thought; more of a sickening odour, it was so sweet.

"I don't know whether I like it or not," she said, doubtingly.

"That's because you have not tried it sufficiently," said he. "You must smell at it for a minute or two; you'll like it then." So Katie took another good sniff, and then another.

And then she began to experience a queer, faint sensation. How strange things were looking around her! Was this curious perfume too strong for her?—had it gone to her head? She felt confused and dizzy, and did not seem to see anything clearly save the pedlar's great black eyes, fixed so keenly upon hers. He gently put her into the arm chair, towards which she began to stagger.

"It is a beautiful scent," he said, the words sounding in her ear like a faint murmur, "but it has been a little strong for your nerves, lady; you must take some more of it to revive you." And he poured some of it on her handkerchief and held it to her face; and Katie Denison fell back in the large chair and lost her senses. She had been wishing something would happen, bad or good, and it had happened, with a vengeance.

When she came to herself, the sun had gone off the window, which was open as before, the hands of the clock were approaching six; her handkerchief, all crumpled together, lay on the carpet, and a neighbour, who lived at a farm half a mile off, was standing over her.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Katie, in confused bewilderment. "What is the matter?"

"That is what I want to know—what the matter is," replied Miss Lake, a capable young woman with a merry tongue. "I came down

to take tea with you this evening, sans ceremonie, for I know you are always glad to see me; and I walk in here at your open glass doors, and find you asleep, as I thought at first. But I could not wake you, Mrs. Denison."

Katie's head was aching terribly; she put her hand up to her brow. What was it all?—what had ailed her?—why was she feeling so strange? Miss Lake gently pushed back her hair and began to fan her hot face. Recollection gradually returned to her. Where was the pedlar?—was he gone? And where—Katie started up with a cry, and snatched her apron off the table.

Nothing was under it. No silver spoons were there; no jewels; no bank notes. Even the desk was gone. Every individual thing had been swept as clean away as if it had never had place in the room.

"The pedlar, the wicked pedlar!" shrieked out Katie. "He has taken it all."

Mary Lake thought her friend's head was wandering: that the intense heat had affected it. "Stay you quietly in the chair," she said, pushing her back into it with gentle force; "you shall have a cup of tea directly. I'll go and help Jane to make it."

"Mary!—wait!—Mary!" sobbed Katie, putting out her hands. "Oh, wait!—listen! Jane is not here to day, and there's nobody to get anything. And that dreadful man has gone off with the money and the silver. It was two hundred and forty pounds."

"I'll get the tea then myself, and have it in a jiffey," cheerfully answered Miss Lake, quite ignoring the other information. "You only sit still where you are."

Bewildered yet, Katie sat still; she was not quite herself at present. In a short while George Denison came in, whistling gleefully and much wanting his tea. But he found no tea-tray on the table; only Katie in the chair, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Halloo! Why, Katie, what's amiss?"

She stretched out her arms to him, and laid her wet face upon his shoulder while she told him her tale. Miss Lake came in with the tea-things at the time and a pot full of tea, all made and ready, and a supply of home-made bread and butter. She gave a side nod to George and a significant look, as much as to say, "Her mind is wandering." He took quite the same view of it.

"But, *indeed*, it is true," sobbed the young wife, when she detected their disbelief. "I only wanted to transplant the rose tree—George knows I have intended to do it—and I found the desk buried under it. Look at the mould here upon the newspaper, if you won't believe me. And I got it open, and it had Aunt Ann's spoons and jewels in it, and two hundred and forty pounds in bank notes. Go out, else, and look at the rose tree."

The poor rose tree was lying on the ground outside, sure enough, and by its side was a huge hole. "There must be something in it,

after all," said George. "It may really be Aunt Ann's lost desk. A pedlar! I wonder which way the fellow is gone?"

"Stay!" cried Mary Lake, as he was turning swiftly to the garden gate. "I met a man looking like a pedlar as I came here; he had a box on his back, and carried something under his coat; he was on the path by the elm coppice, as if making for Bestley. A moment more, Mr. Denison," detaining yet his impatient steps. "Call at the farm; I know the horses are in; get one saddled at once, and you will overtake him."

George Denison took the horse; young Farmer Lake took another; and they rode away at full speed. Half way to Bestley, in a lonely part of the road, they came upon the gentleman with the pack. Divining the errand of the horsemen, the pedlar dropped the desk he had stolen, ran towards Bestley Wood as fast as his pack would let him, and disappeared within it. George Denison recognised his aunt's desk, undid the strap which had been put round it, saw that the contents were safe, including the money, and stopped pursuit.

"And you never rode after him! You never took him!" cried Mary Lake, breathlessly, when he got back. To which Mr. Denison shook his head.

"You let the fellow escape?"

"Why, yes, I did, Miss Mary," was the reply. "It was an almost irresistible temptation, you see, that to which he had been exposed. Only fancy what it must be to a man of his calibre—to come unsuspectingly in at the garden gate here, and see a lot of money and jewels set forth on the table, with nobody, so to say, to guard them. I daresay it will have taught him a lesson. And I hope it has taught my wife one," turning to her with a nod, "not to display treasures right before an open window."

"Oh, George! But what should we have done, what *could* we have done, if he had got clean off with the booty?"

"Well, Katie, we should only have been where we were before."

"And I daresay you would never have believed that I had dug anything up, or that it was your Aunt Ann's lost desk. One thing I can promise, George, and heartily too—that I will never again when I am dreary wish anything to happen, good or *bad*. Bad enough it has been."

"Nay, my little wife, I think it has been all good, barring your dose of ether—or whatever the stupefying stuff might be. And you must not let Jane go home again, to leave you alone, or you may have all the fraternity of pedlars paying you periodical visits."

"The ear-rings are so beautiful, George, especially the blue ones. Shall you let me have both pairs? They will look so pretty in my ears!"

"Eve, Eve!" cried George Denison.

THE BROOK AND THE CLOUD.

A VALLEY filled with gold and green
 Beneath the sun was glinting ;
 The flowers put on their brightest sheen,
 The leaves their fairest tinting.
 And through it all a river ran ;
 'Twas but a little river ;
 It had such joy as river can,
 And wanted joy for ever.

And then a cloud came in the sky,
 And black it seemed with anger ;
 The river, seeing it on high,
 Was filled with sudden languor :—
 "O cloud," it said, "you make me sad,
 You injure wood and meadow ;
 My face, so lately bright and glad,
 Is now defiled with shadow."

The cloud went back. The sun shone on
 In all its golden brightness :
 The happy brook on which it shone
 Carolled for true heart-lightness.
 Yet every day some life it spent,
 And every night sank lower,
 And by-and-by so slow it went,
 It scarcely could go slower.

And soon it lost all vital strength
 Beneath the sun's fierce burning ;
 There was no life in all its length,
 No power of moving, turning.
 "O cloud, O cloud, come back," it said,
 "For I am weak with sighing,
 And drop some tears upon my bed
 To comfort me, in dying."

The cloud came back. It rained that night,
 And all the long day after,
 And though the sun was hidden quite,
 The valley rang with laughter.
 And then the brook with smiles confest—
 And seemed to like confessing—
 "The clouds that give us most unrest
 May be most full of blessing."

J. T. BURTON WOLLASTON.



THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VII.

DESPERATION.

ALONE in the oak-parlour at Moat Grange, playing soft bits of melody in the summer twilight, sat Selina Dalrymple, her very pretty face slightly flushed, her bright hair pushed from her face. Ordinarily of a calm and equable temperament, Selina was yet rather given to work herself up to restlessness on occasion. She was expecting Oscar Dalrymple; and though the excitement did not arise for himself, it did for the news he might bring.

"There he is!" she cried, as a step was heard on the gravel. "He has walked up from the station."

Oscar Dalrymple came in, very quiet as usual, not a speck of dust or other sign of travel upon him, looking spick and span as though he had but come out of the next room. Oscar Dalrymple's place, a small patrimony called Knutford, lay some three or four miles off; he would probably walk on there by-and-by, if he did not sleep at the Grange.

"I thought you would come!" exclaimed Selina, gladly springing towards him.

"I told Mrs. Dalrymple I should return before Saturday," was his answer, as he took her hand, and kept it in his. "Where is she?"

"Gone with Alice to dine at Court Netherleigh," replied Selina. "I sent an excuse: I was impatient to see you."

"Thank you, Selina," he whispered, in a low, warm tone. "That is a great admission from you."

"Not to see *you*; but for what you might have to tell," she hastened to say. "Oscar, how vain you are!"

She sat down in the bow-window, in what remaining light there was, and he took a chair opposite to her. Then she asked him his news.

"Do you know exactly why I went up?" he enquired with some hesitation, in doubt how far he ought to speak.

"I know all," she answered pointedly. "I saw Reuben's letter to mamma; and her fears are my fears. We keep it from poor Alice."

In a hushed voice, befitting the subject and the twilight hour, Oscar related to her what he had gathered in London. The very worst impression lay on his own mind: namely, that Robert was going rapidly to the dogs, money and honour and peace, and all; nay, had already gone; but he did not make the worst of it to Selina. He said that Robert seemed to be on a downward course and would not listen to any sort of reason.

Selina sat in dismay; her soft, dark eyes fixed on the evening sky, her hands clasped on the dress of blue silk she wore. The evening star shone in the heavens.

"What will be the end of it, Oscar?"

Oscar did not immediately answer. The end of it, as he fully believed, would be ruin. Utter ruin for Robert; and that would involve ruin for his mother and sisters.

"Does Robert really *play*?" pursued Selina.

"I fear he does. Yes."

"Could—could he play away our home—Moat Grange?"

"For his own life. That is, mortgage its revenues."

"But you don't, surely, *fear* it will come to this?" she cried in agitation.

"Selina, I hardly know what I fear. Robert is not my brother, and I could not—I had no right—to question too closely. Neither, if I had questioned, and—and heard the worst—do I see what I could have done. Matters have gone too far for any aid, any suggestion, that I could have given."

"What would become of us? Poor mamma! Poor Alice! Oh, what a trouble!"

"You, at least, can escape the trouble, Selina; you can let me take you out of it. My home is not the luxurious home you have been accustomed to here; but it will afford you every comfort—if you will but come to it. Oh, my love, why do you let me plead to you so long in vain!"

Selina Dalrymple pouted her pretty red lips. Oscar loved her to folly. She did not discourage him; did not absolutely encourage him. She liked him very well, and she liked his homage, for she was one of the vainest girls living; but, as to marrying him?—that was another thing. Had he possessed the rent-roll of a duke, she would have had him to-morrow; his income was a small one, and she loved pomp and show.

"Now, Oscar!" she remonstrated, putting him off as usual. "Is it a time to bring in that nonsense, when we are talking and thinking of poor Robert?—And here come mamma and Alice, for that's Miss Upton's carriage bringing them. They said they should be home early."

And now we have to go back some few hours. It is very inconvenient, as the world knows, to tell two portions of a story at one and the same time.

Turning out of one of the handsomest houses in Grosvenor Square, in the bright sunshine of this same Friday afternoon in June, went Robert Dalrymple, his step spiritless, a look of perplexity and pain on his young and attractive face. He had been saying farewell to Mary Lynn, and he felt, in his despairing heart, that it must be for life. Just a hint he whispered to her of the worst—that he had been heedless and reckless, and was ruined; but, woman-like, fond, confiding woman, she had told him she never would believe it, and if it was so, there existed all the more reason for her clinging to him.

Ah, if it only might be! If the prospect just suggested to him by that good man, Mr. Grubb, might only be realised! If he could pull up at any cost, and enter upon a peaceful life! *If!* None knew better than himself that there was no chance of it. All he had was gone—and, had not Mr. Grubb left it to his honour?

Robert Dalrymple was ruined. Bitterly was the fact impressing itself upon him, as he walked there under the summer sunlight. Not only were all his available funds spent, but he had entered into liabilities thick and threefold, far beyond what the rent-roll at the Grange would be sufficient to meet. He had told Oscar Dalrymple this very morning that he did not play much the previous night. Oscar did not believe it, but it was true. Why did he not play much? Because he had nothing left to play with, and had sat gloomy and morose, looking on at the other players. Introduced to the evil fascinations of play by Colonel Haughton, he was drawn on until the unhappy mania took hold upon himself. To remain away from the gambling-table for one night would have been intolerable, for the feverish disease was raging within him. Poor infatuated man!—poor infatuated men, all of them, who thus lose themselves!—he was positively still indulging a vision of success and hope. Every time that he approached the pernicious table, it was rife within him, buoying him up, and urging him on—that luck might turn in his favour, and he might win the Grange back—or, rather, the money he had lost upon it. Thus it is with all gamblers who are comparatively fresh to the vice; only the vile old sinners such as Colonel Haughton and his confederate, Piggott, know what such is worth. The ignis-fatuus, delusive hope, beckoning ever onwards, lures them to their destruction. Pandora's box, you know, contained every imaginable evil, but Hope lay at the bottom. Even now, as Robert is walking to South Audley Street, a feverish gleam of hope is positively rising up within him. If he had but money to go to the tables that night, who knew but the luck might turn, and he could extricate himself from his most pressing debts, and so be able to tell the whole truth to Mr. Grubb?—and how carefully he would avoid all evil in future.

when Mary should be his wife ! But—where was the use of conjuring up these fantastic visions, he asked himself, as he flung himself into a chair in his sitting-room, when he had no money to stake ?

Everything was gone, every available thing ; he had nothing left but the watch he had about him, and the ring he wore—and a few loose shillings in his pocket. Nothing whatever, in the house, or out of it.

Yes, he had. But it was not his. Farmer Lee, wishing to invest a few hundred pounds in the funds, had prayed his young landlord to transact the business for him, and save him a journey to London. Robert good-naturedly acquiesced. Had any man told him he could touch that money for his own purposes, he would have knocked the offender down in his indignation. The cheque, for the money to be transferred, had come from Mr. Lee that morning. There it lay now, on the table at his elbow, and there sat Robert, striving to turn his covetous eyes from it, yet unable, for it was beginning to bear for him the fascination of the basilisk. He wished it was in the midst of some blazing fire, rather than lying there to tempt him. For the notion had seized upon his mind that it was with this money, if he might dare to stake it, he might win back a portion of what he had lost. With a shudder, he shook off the idea, and looked at his watch. Was it too late to take the cheque to its destination ? Yes, it was ; the afternoon was waning, and business places would be closed. Robert felt half inclined to hand it to Reuben, and tell him to keep it in safety.

While in this frame of mind, that choice friend of his, Mr. Piggott, honoured him with a call. Whether that worthy gentleman scented the presence of the cheque, or heard of it casually from Robert, who was candid to a fault, certain it was that he did not leave Robert afterwards, but sat with him until the dinner hour, and then took him out to dine. Robert locked up the cheque in his desk before he went.

About eleven o'clock he came home again, heated with wine. Opening his desk, he snatched out the cheque and hid it away in his breast-pocket, as if it were something he had a horror of looking at. Piggott and Colonel Haughton had plied him with something besides wine : alluring hopes. Turning to leave the room, buttoning his coat over what it contained, he saw Reuben standing there.

“ Mr. Robert !—Do not go out again to-night.”

Robert stared at the man.

“ Sir, I carried you in my arms when you were a child ; your father, the very day he died, told me to give you a word of warning, if I saw you going wrong ; let that be my excuse for speaking to you as you may think I have no right to do,” pleaded Reuben, the tears standing in his faithful old eyes. “ Do not go out again, sir ; for this night, at any rate, stay away from the set, they are nothing but black-legs. There’s that Piggott waiting for you outside the door.”

“ Reuben, don’t be a fool. How dare you say my friends are blacklegs ? ”

"They are so, sir. And you are losing your substance to them; and it won't be their fault if they don't get it all."

Robert, eager to go out to his ruin, hot with wine, would not waste more words. He moved to the door, but Reuben moved more quickly than he, and stood with his back against it.

"What farce is this?" cried Robert, in his temper. "Stand away from the door, or I shall be tempted to fling you from it."

"Oh, sir, hear reason!" and the man's manner was so painfully urgent, that a half doubt crossed his master's mind whether he could know what it was he was about to stake. "Three or four and twenty years ago, Mr. Robert—I'm not sure as to a year—I stood, in like manner, praying your uncle Claude not to go out to his ruin. He had come to London, sir, as fine and generous a young man as you, and the gamblers got hold of him, and drew him into their ways, and stuck to him, like a leech, till all he had was gone. Moat Grange was played away, mortgaged or bartered, or whatever it might be, for the term of his life; there's a clause in its deeds, as I take it you know, sir, that prevents its owner from encumbering it for longer—and, perhaps, that's usual with other estates——"

"You are an idiot, Reuben," interrupted Robert, his tone less fierce.

"A night came when Mr. Claude was half mad," continued Reuben, unheeding the interruption. "I saw he was; and I stood before him, and prayed him not to go out with them, as I am now praying you. It was of no use, and he went. If I tell you what that night brought forth, sir, will you regard it as a warning?"

"What did it bring forth?" demanded Robert, arrested to interest.

"I will tell you, sir, if you will take warning by it, and break with those gamblers, this night, and never go amongst them more. Will you promise, Mr. Robert?"

"Out of the way, Reuben," was the impatient rejoinder. "You are getting into your dotage. If you have nothing to tell me, let me go."

"Listen, then," cried Reuben, bending his head forward, in his excitement. "At three o'clock, that same morning, Mr. Dalrymple returned. He had been half mad, I say, when he went, he was wholly mad when he came back; mad with despair and despondency. He came in, his head down, his steps lagging, and went into his bedroom. I went to mine, and was undressing, when he called me back. He had got his portmanteau from against the wall, opened it, and was standing over it, looking in, his coat and cravat off, and the collar of his shirt unbuttoned. 'Reuben,' said he, 'I have made up my mind to leave London and take a journey.'"

"Down to the Grange, sir?" I asked, my heart leaping within me at the good news.

"No, not to the Grange, this time; it's farther than that. But as I have not informed anyone of my intentions, I must leave a word with you, in case I am enquired after."

“ ‘Am I not to attend you, sir?’ I interrupted.

“ ‘No, I shan’t want you particularly,’ he answered; ‘you’ll do more good here. Tell all who may enquire for me, and especially my brother (your father, sir, you know), that although they may think I did wrong to start alone on a road where I have never been, I am obliged to do so. I cannot help myself. Tell them I deliberated upon it before making up my mind, and that I undertake it in the possession of all my faculties and senses.’ Those were the words.”

“Well?” cried Robert, impatient for the end of the tale.

“I found these words somewhat strange,” continued Reuben, “but his true meaning never struck me—Oh,” wailed the old man, clasping his hands, “it never struck me. My thoughts only turned to Scotland; for my master had been talking of going there to see a Scotch laird, a friend of his, and I believed he had now taken a sudden resolution to pay the visit; I thought he had pulled out his trunk to put in some things before I packed it. I asked him when he intended to start, and he replied that I should know all in the morning; and I went back to my bed.”

Robert sat down on the nearest chair: his eyes were strained on Reuben. Had he a foreshadowing of what was to come?

“In the morning one of the women servants came and woke me. Her face startled me the moment I opened my eyes; it was white and terror-stricken, and she asked me what that stream of red meant that had trickled from under the door of the master’s chamber. I went there when I had put a thing or two on. Master Robert,” he added, dropping his voice to a dread whisper, his thoughts wholly back in the past, “he had indeed gone on his long journey.”

“Was he dead?”

“He had been dead for hours. The razor was lying beside him, near the door. I have never quite got over that dreadful sight: and the thought has always haunted me that, had I understood his meaning properly, it might have been prevented.”

“His trunk—what did he get that out for?” asked Robert, after a pause.

“To blind me, sir—as I have believed since.”

“Why did he commit the deed?” gloomily continued Robert, whom the account seemed to have partially sobered.

“He had fallen into the clutches of the same sort of people that you have, sir, and they had fleeced him down to beggary and shame, and he had not the resolution to leave them, and face the poverty; that was why he did it. His worst enemy was Captain Haughton. He is Colonel Haughton now.”

“What do you mean?” cried Robert Dalrymple, after a pause of astonishment.

“Yes, sir, the same man. He is your evil genius, and he was your uncle’s before you. The last time I saw him, in the old days,

was when we both stood together over my master's dead body ; he came in, along with others. 'He must have been stark mad,' was his exclamation, as he looked down at him. 'Perhaps so, Captain Haughton,' I answered, 'but the guilt lies on those who drove him so.' He took my meaning, and he slunk away out of the room. Mr. Robert," added the old man, the tears streaming down his cheeks, "do you know what I like to fancy—and to hope?"

Robert lifted his eyes.

"Why, that the *punishment* will lie with these wretched tempters, as well as the guilt. The good God is just and merciful."

Robert did not speak. Reuben resumed.

"The first time that Haughton called here upon you, sir, I knew him, and he knew me ; and I don't think he liked it. He has never come here himself since ; I don't know whether you've noticed it, sir, he has sent that Piggott—the man that's waiting for you outside now. Mr. Robert, you had better have fallen into the meshes of the Fiend himself, than into that man, Haughton's."

"My uncle must have been insane when he did that," broke from Robert Dalrymple.

"The jury said otherwise," sadly answered Reuben. "They brought it in *felo-de-se* ; and he was buried by torchlight, without the burial service."

The news had told upon Robert. His mind, just then, was a chaos. Nothing tangible showing out of it, save that his plight was as bad as his uncle Claude's had been, and that he was looking, in his infatuation, for that night to redeem it. *Could* he go on with his work—with that example before him ? For a while he sat thinking, his head bent, his eyes closed ; then he rose up, and signed to Reuben to let him pass. The latter's spirit sank within him.

"Is what I have told you of no avail, Mr. Robert ? Are you still bent on going forth to those wicked men ? It will be your ruin."

"It is that already, Reuben. As it was with my uncle, so it is with me : I am ruined, and worse than ruined, and after to-night I will know Colonel Haughton no more. But I had resolved to make one desperate effort this night to redeem myself ; something whispers to me that I shall have luck ; and—and you don't know how much lies upon it."

He was thinking of his union with Mary Lynn, poor infatuated man. Could he redeem himself in a degree this night, he would disclose his position to Mr. Grubb, entreat his condonation of the past, and forswear play for ever. A tempting prospect. Nevertheless, the tale had staggered him.

"Don't go, don't go, Mr. Robert. I ask you on my bended knees."

"Get up, Reuben ; don't be foolish. Perhaps I will not go. But I must tell Piggott. I cannot keep him waiting there all night."

Reuben could do no more. He stood aside, and his young master went forth, *hesitating*.

What strange infatuation could it have been, that it should so cling to him? Anyone who has never been drawn into the fiery vortex of gambling would have a difficulty in understanding it. Robert Dalrymple was a desperate man, and yet a hopeful one, for this night might lift him out of despair. Moreover, the feverish yearning for play, in itself, was strong upon him; as it always was now, at that night hour. As yet the penalty he had incurred was but embarrassment and poverty: he was now about to stake what was not his, and risk guilt. And yet, *he went forth*: for the dreadful vice had got fast hold of him; and he knew that the hesitation in his mind was but worthless hesitation; a species of sophistry.

Mr. Piggott had been cooling his heels and his patience outside, not blessing his young friend for the unnecessary and unexpected delay, and not doing the opposite. He was of too equable a nature to curse and swear: he left that to his peppery partner, Haughton.

"I thought you were gone to bed," he said, when Robert appeared: "in another minute I should have come in to see after you."

And it was a wonder he did not go in. But Colonel Haughton had whispered a word of caution as to Reuben, and neither of them cared to pursue the master too persistently in the man's sight. Robert Dalrymple spoke of his hesitation, saying he was not sure he should play that night. He did want to keep the farce of prudence up, even to himself.

"You have got that cheque in your pocket, I suppose?" sharply questioned Piggott.

"Yes. But ——"

"Come on, then; we'll talk of it as we go along." And Robert linked his arm within Mr. Piggott's and walked on in the direction of Jermyn Street.

They entered the "hell." It is not a pleasant word for polite pens and ears, but it is an exceedingly appropriate one. It was blazing with light, and as hot as——as its name; and fiery countenances of impassioned triumph, and agonised countenances of vacillating suspense, and sullen countenances of despair, were crowding there. Colonel Haughton was in a private room: it was mostly kept for himself and his friends, a choice knot of whom stood around. Poor Robert's infatuation, under Mr. Piggott's able tuition, had returned upon him. Down he sat at the green cloth, wild and eager.

"It is of no use to make fools of us," whispered Colonel Haughton. "You know you do not possess another stiver; why take up a place?"

"Now, Haughton, you are too stringent," benevolently interposed Mr. Piggott, laying hold of the Colonel's arm, and giving it a peculiar pinch. "Here is Dalrymple, with an impression that luck will be upon him to-night, a conviction of it, indeed, and you are afraid of

giving him his revenge. It is his turn to win now. As to stakes, he says he has something with him that will do."

Robert drew the cheque from his pocket, and dashed it before Colonel Haughton. "I am prepared to stake this," he said. "Nothing risk, nothing win. Luck must favour me to-night. Even Piggott says so, and he knows how bad it has been."

Colonel Haughton ran his spectacles over the cheque. "I see," he said: "it will do. The risking it is your business, not ours."

"Of course it is mine," answered Robert Dalrymple.

"Then put your signature to it. Here, by the side of the other."

It was done, and they sat down to play. "Nothing risk, nothing win," Robert had said: he had better have said, "Nothing risk, nothing lose;" and have acted upon it. A little past midnight, he went staggering out of that house, a doomed man. All was over, all lost. Farmer Lee's money, or the cheque representing it, had passed out of his possession, and he was a criminal. A criminal in the sight of himself, soon to be a criminal in the sight of the world; liable to be arrested and tried at the bar of justice, a common felon.

He had tasted nothing since he entered, yet he reeled about the pavement like one who is the worse for drink. What was to become of him? Involuntarily the fate his unfortunate uncle Claude had resorted to came across his mind: nay, it had not been away from it. Even in the mad turmoil of that last hour, when the suspense was awful to bear, and hope and dread had fought with each other as a meeting whirlwind, the facts of that dark history had been thrusting themselves forward.

His face was burning without, and his brain was burning within. It was a remarkably windy night, and he took off his hat and suffered the breeze to blow on his miserable brow. And so he paced the streets, going from home, not to it. Where *could* he go? he with the brand of crime and shame upon him? He got to Charing Cross, and there he halted, and listened to the different clocks striking one. Should he turn back to South Audley Street? And encounter Reuben, who had tried to save him, and had failed? And go to bed, and wait, with what calmness he might, till the law claimed him? Hardly. Anywhere but home. The breeze was stronger now: it blew from the direction of the water. Robert Dalrymple replaced his hat, pulled it firmly on his head to hide his eyes from the night, and dragged his steps towards Westminster Bridge.

Of all places in the world!—the bridge and the tempting stream!—what evil power impelled him thither?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BABY.

IN the bed of a large and luxurious chamber, her delicate face pressing the pillow, her eyes closed to the shaded light, lay Lady Adela Grubb. The baby she so wished for had come at last. Not that it was the baby itself she wanted, but that she might be at liberty through renewed health to mingle with the great world again. To be deprived of its gaiety and obliged to keep herself very much at home had been to her a species of intolerable thralldom.

The baby was born on Friday night: a few hours subsequent to Robert Dalrymple's interview with Mr. Grubb and Mary Lynn. Mary, only in Grosvenor Square for the afternoon, returned to Blackheath unconscious of the close approach of the event. The illness had been a favourable one; and Adela, on this Sunday morning, was going on well towards recovery. She had taken her breakfast, and was ready to see her husband. The doctor had but now gone out.

A wee cry from the cradle yonder caused her to open her eyes. An elderly woman, with soft step, bent over the cradle, and would have hushed the baby to sleep again.

"Put him here, nurse. I want to look at him."

The nurse took up the white bundle, and laid it in the great bed, beside Lady Adela. The little pale face was turned to her; for it was a pale face, not a red one; and she lay looking at it. The child opened its eyes: and, young though it was, one could see it had the beautiful grey-blue eyes of its father. Her own brilliant yet soft brown eyes grew fond as she gazed on the still face.

"Is he quite healthy, nurse?" she suddenly asked.

For the space of half a moment the nurse hesitated. "He was born quite healthy, my lady; but I think he might get on better if you nursed him. Some infants require their mothers more than others do. I suspect this one does."

She made no reply; except by a toss of the head, all but imperceptible: one can't toss effectively lying down. There had been some trouble with Lady Adela on the score of nursing the child. Nothing would induce her to do it. It would be well for her and well for the little one, Dr. Dove had said. Adela would not listen. Her mother, Lady Acorn, had treated her to a sharp scolding the day before, Saturday, and told her she was "unnatural." All the same: Adela indignantly demanded whether they thought she should give up the season for any infant in the world. She was also obstinate on another score—she would not allow, would not hear of, a nurse being sought for to supply her place. And there she lay this morning; her own head on one pillow, the child's on another. One of the windows was open behind the drawn blind,

admitting a breath of the warm June air. On a stand at Lady Adela's elbow lay a bouquet of sweet-scented, lovely hot-house flowers.

"Little wee thing?" she fondly cried, stretching out her fingers to stroke the baby's soft face, and its fragile hand that lay so still.

A tap at the door. The nurse answered it and admitted Mr. Grubb; she herself then retiring to the next room, which opened from this one. He came to the bed, bent over his wife, and gently kissed her.

"Oh, don't!" she cried, twisting her cheek ungraciously from him, just as she had mostly done ever since their wedding day. It had grown into a habit now.

"Adela," he whispered, biting his trembling lips to keep down the pain, "should not this little treasure, our child, teach you to be more of a loving wife to me?"

"I am very sorry it has come," she answered in a fretful tone. "I'm sure I shall be if they are going to worry me over it. You should hear mamma go on!—and Grace, too!—with their old-fashioned notions."

"No one shall worry you," he fondly said. "Tell me, Adela, what you would like his name to be."

"His name!" she repeated, looking up in quick surprise. "Time enough for that."

"Dr. Dove thinks it may be as well to have him baptised. He came into the library just now as he went out; and, in talking of one thing and another, he chanced to mention this." *Chanced* to mention this! Mr. Grubb was cautious not to alarm his wife.

"The baby is not ill! Is it?"

"No, no, I trust not, Adela. It is a delicate little thing; all babies are, perhaps: and—and it is as well, you know, to be on the safe side."

"But I should like a christening. A grand, proper christening; to be held when I get well."

"Of course. His being baptised now will make no difference to that. I think it must be done, my dear."

"In this room, then; by my bed-side. I should like to see it."

"You shall. And now, what name?"

Adela lay back on the pillow, her cheeks slightly flushed with their delicate pink, fresh and pure as the hue of a sea-shell, her eyes cast upwards in thought.

"I think I should like it to have papa's name—George."

"George Frederick?"

"Not Frederick: I don't care about the name. George—would you like also your own name—Francis?" she broke off to ask. "George Francis?"

"Would you care to have it Francis?" he returned, his tone one of emotion, bending over her until his face nearly touched hers.

She heard the tone, she saw the wet eyelashes shading the wonder-

ful grey eyes, with their yearning, earnest expression. It flashed into her mind to remember how few men were his compeers, in good looks, in worth, in loving indulgence to a rebellious wife. Adela was not quite proof against her better nature. She was not always hard.

"Yes, I should ; and he has your eyes," she whispered softly, in answer to the question, her own eyes lifted to her husband's.

"Adela," he breathed, his voice low with its agitation, "you do love me a little ! You surely do !"

"Just a very little—sometimes," she whispered in a half saucy, half loving tone. And, when he let his face fall on hers, she for once held it there, and welcomed the kisses from his lips.

It was all the work of the baby, his child and hers, thought he in his glad heart. But no. Now and again, at rare intervals, Adela did feel a spark of tenderness for him : though instead of letting it come to fruit, of allowing him to see it, she forced it back to the coldness she had taken up, and resolutely steeled her heart against him. Illness had just now somewhat softened her spirit.

He went round the bed to the side where the baby lay, and looked at it long and earnestly. The doctor had just told him that he did not feel altogether easy on the score of the child ; could not be sure that it was likely to live.

"It is a pale little blossom, Adela. I thought babies were generally red."

"Frightfully red. I have seen them."

"Well, we will get it baptised ; and then ——"

"What ?" she cried—for he had stopped.

"And then, I was going to say, whether it lives or dies it will be safe in its Saviour's arms."

"But you do not *think* it will die ?" she cried, picking up some alarm. "Oh, Francis, I should not like him to die now he has come !"

He went round to soothe her, the word "Francis" causing his heart to leap. For in a general way she persistently called him "Mr. Grubb," and not graciously either.

"My darling, I assure you there is no cause for alarm. So far as I know, the child is not ill ; it will, I hope, do well. Dr. Dove does not think him particularly strong—but what can be expected of a two-day old baby ?"

"True," answered Adela, feeling reassured again. "Francis, I do believe there's mamma coming up ! Yes, it is her voice. Mind you don't tell her ——"

Lady Acorn came swiftly in ; and, what he was not to tell her, Mr. Grubb never knew. She had dressed early for church, and came round to see Adela on her way to it. Grace was with her. One of the daughters had married during the past year, but it was not Grace. It was Harriet ; she had espoused an old Scotch laird, Sir Sandy Mac Ivor. Peppery and red, in came the Countess, for she had just

heard something that vexed her ; Lady Grace, so calm and still, presented a contrast to her vivacious mother.

"Well, and now what's this I hear about things not going on well?" began Lady Acorn, subduing her voice with difficulty to the requisition of a sick room.

"I am going on very well, mamma—how do you mean?" returned Adela, assuming the doubt must apply to herself. "I have made a famous breakfast. They let me have an egg and some buttered toast."

"You are all right, Dove says—we have just met him," returned Lady Acorn. "But he does not think the baby is. And you have got yourself to thank for it, Adela."

The pink tinge on Lady Adela's cheeks increased to rose colour, as she armed herself to do battle with her mother.

"Dove says the baby wants its proper food ; not that gruel stuff, or milk-and-water, or whatever rubbish it is, that it is being dosed with. And it is not too late for you to reform, Adela, and do what you ought."

"It is too late," retorted Adela, with flaming cheeks. "And if you begin about it again, mamma, you will make me ill. Francis"—stretching out her arm for her husband—"don't let me be worried. You promised me, you know."

With a loving word to his wife, a reassuring pressure of her hand, which he kept in his, he turned to Lady Acorn and spoke to her in a low tone.

"Talk to her when she's better and more able to bear it!" repeated the Countess, taking up his words aloud. "Why, my good man, it would be too late. And—you do not want to lose your child, I suppose!"

"Indeed, I do not. But, better lose my child than my wife."

"*She* is well enough, and safe enough," spoke the mother, secure in her superior knowledge. "Adela has been an indulged girl all her life, and you, her husband, continue the indulgence. It is not good for her ; mark you that. With regard to this caprice of hers, the not undertaking the poor sickly baby, you ought to hold her to her duty, Mr. Grubb, and insist upon her fulfilling it."

He turned to his wife, his eyes unconsciously wearing a pleading look. "If you would but suffer yourself to be persuaded, Adela! For the child's sake."

Adela looked at them separately ; at her husband, at her mother, at Grace, standing with a cold and impassive countenance that did not betoken approbation ; and she took up a notion that they were in league with one another to "hold her to her duty," and enforce obedience. Had not the doctor talked to her that very morning : had not the nurse subsequently presumed to hint at an opinion? Yes, they were all in league together. Lady Adela turned rebellious, and flung her husband's hand away with passionate anger.

"Why do you come into my room at all?" she exclaimed to him. "You know I do not want you."

At that moment the nurse looked in from the adjoining apartment and made a sign to Mr. Grubb. He obeyed it at once, taking no notice of his wife or her cruel words.

"There! you have driven him away now!" cried Lady Acorn, on the eve of an explosion: for she had not seen the summons of the nurse. "You will never go to heaven, Adela, for your wickedness to your husband."

Adela did not make any answer: perhaps she was feeling a little sorry in her heart: and there ensued a silence. The sweet-toned bells, calling people to service, rang out on the air.

Mr. Grubb came in again. Feeling more alarmed in his heart at the doctor's words than he allowed to appear, and anxious for the child, he had written a note as the medical man left him, and sent it to a young assistant clergyman whose lodgings were hard by. He had now called, on his way to church, ready to perform the ceremony at once if it were wished for, and a servant had come up to inform the nurse.

"Mr. Wilkinson has called, and is asking after you," began Mr. Grubb to his wife, voice and demeanour a model of quietness, not to say indifference. "It struck me, Adela, that he might as well baptise the child—as he is here. He has time to do it before service."

"What a hurry you are in!" she returned, ungraciously.

"As well take the opportunity of his being here, Adela. And then it will be over."

"Oh, well, yes—if it has to be done," conceded she. "I'm sure there's no necessity for it. Let Wilkinson come up."

Lady Acorn's sharp red nose turned of a fine purple. She had listened in surprise. Saying nothing to Adela, she trotted into the dressing-room, and shut the door.

"What's this, nurse—about the child being baptised?"

"I believe it is going to be done, my lady. Mr. Grubb has just said a word to me."

"Is it so ill as that?"

"Well, no, I did not think it was," acknowledged the woman. "Dr. Dove did not much like its look this morning; I saw that. I suppose he spoke to Mr. Grubb more fully than to me."

"Do you think it is in any danger?"

The nurse paused before replying. "One can never be quite sure of these very young infants. When it was born I thought it a nice healthy little thing; yesterday it seemed quiet and pecky, and wailed a bit; this morning it seems anything but well, and does not take its food. Still, my lady, I can't say that it is in danger."

Lady Acorn nodded her head and her bonnet two or three times, as if not satisfied with affairs in general, and went back to her daughter's room.

The young clergyman came up; things were made ready; and they

gathered round in a group at the bed-side, kneeling down for the short preparatory prayers used in private baptism. When they arose, the clergyman took the child in his arms from Grace who had held it.

"Name this child."

"George," promptly spoke the mother from the bed, her tone giving emphasis to the word. And Francis Grubb's face flushed as he heard it. Ah, what pain was often his!

The short service was soon over. Mr. Wilkinson departed for his church; Lady Acorn and Grace followed him. The nurse had gone back to the dressing-room. Mr. Grubb stood by the bed in which the quiet child had again been laid.

"I thought you were going to church?" said Lady Adela.

"Yes; directly." He wanted especially to go to church that day; to return thanks to God for the mercy vouchsafed him in the preservation of his wife. Though, indeed, he had not waited to be in church to do that.

"How quiet the baby was all through it!" cried Adela.

"Very quiet. Too quiet, your mother says."

"Mamma says all sorts of things when she is in a temper, as you have learnt by this time, and she is in one this morning," was Adela's light and not over dutiful remark. Not but that it was true.

Mr. Grubb had taken the child in his arms, and stood looking down upon it. Save that its eyes were open and that it breathed, it seemed still enough for death. He did not understand babies, but he did think this one was unnaturally quiet.

"Why are you looking at him so attentively?" asked Adela, by-and-by.

"I don't think he can be well."

"But—you don't think he is *ill*, do you?" returned she, after a pause, and speaking quickly.

"Adela, I do not know. He seems to me to have changed a little in the last half hour, since I first came in. Of course, I may be mistaken."

"Suppose you send for Dr. Dove?"

"I can send if you like: he has just gone, you know. The nurse does not seem to be"—alarmed, he was about to say, but changed the word—"anxious; so it may be all well."

He put the baby in its place, and Lady Adela raised her head to look at it. "He gets paler, I think," she observed; "and, as you say, he is very, very quiet. Poor little thing, he has no strength yet."

"He cannot have much of that," remarked Mr. Grubb. "The nurse says she cannot get him to take his food. If he does not, he must sink, Adela."

Their eyes met. There was certainly no reproach in his, only a standing look of pain. Adela did not want her baby to die, and the fear of it was beginning to trouble her; she was aware that, looking

at matters from *their* point of view, her enemies', she might not be altogether unconscious of meriting some reproach. Back she lay on the pillow again, and burst into tears.

Mr. Grubb went round, bent down, and sheltered her head on his breast. "I don't want him to die," she sobbed.

"Won't you try to save him?" he whispered in his tenderly persuasive tones, as he held her face close to his own.

"But the trouble!—and the sacrifice. Oh, how cross and contrary the world sometimes is!"

"Your own child and mine, Adela! It would be but a little sacrifice, a little trouble. When he gets older he will repay you love for love."

A pause. "I suppose you will be very cross with me if I don't, Francis."

"Am I ever cross with you? I should grieve for the child if he died; I should grieve for your grief, for I know you would feel it. Oh, my darling, won't you try to save him? To do so must be right in God's sight."

She cried silently for a minute longer, her wet cheek lying contentedly against his. "Perhaps I will," she whispered in his ear. "For *his* sake, you know."

"For all our sakes, Adela."

"Put him nearer to me, please. I will look at him again—whether he does seem ill. And how late you will be at church!"

"Not very; the bell is going yet," said Mr. Grubb. He placed the infant where she could look at it closely; gave her a farewell kiss, and departed. Adela rang for the nurse.

"You may throw away all the stupid gruel, nurse. I shall not let the baby have any more of it."

CHAPTER IX.

JOSEPH HORN'S TESTIMONY.

"SOME one is waiting to see you, sir," said one of Mr. Grubb's servants to him, as he entered the house on his return from church.

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Dalrymple's man, sir. He has been waiting nearly an hour."

Reuben came forward from the back of the hall. The moment Mr. Grubb caught sight of his face, usually so full of healthy bloom, now pale and woe-begone, he was seized with a presentiment of evil.

"Come into the library, Reuben," he said. "Have you brought ill news of any kind?" he added, shutting the door. "What is it?"

And, to make matters more intelligible to you, reader, we will go back to the past Friday night, when Robert Dalrymple left his lodgings in the company of Mr. Piggott, leaving poor Reuben in distress and despair.

Reuben sat up the livelong night. The light dawned after the brief interval of darkness, very brief in June, the sun came out, the cries and bustle in the streets gradually set in, and London had begun another day. At six o'clock Reuben lay down on his bed for an hour, and then got himself a bit of breakfast—which he could not eat. His master did not come.

Fearing he knew not what, and attaching more importance, in his vague uneasiness, to Robert's having stayed out than he might have done at another time, at nine o'clock Reuben betook himself to Mr. Piggott's. That gentleman did not live in very fashionable lodgings, and his address was usually given at his club, not there. Reuben, however, knew it. Some time before, Reuben had gone on a fishing tour, to catch what information he could as to the private concerns of Mr. Piggott and Colonel Haughton, and had found out where each lived.

The slipshod servant who came to the door could say nothing as to whether Mr. Dalrymple was staying the night there; all she knew was, that Mr. Piggott "warn't up yet." Reuben inquired as to the locality of Mr. Piggott's chamber, went up to it without opposition, and knocked at the door; a sharp, loud knock.

"Who's there?"

Another knock, sharper still.

"Come in."

Reuben walked in at once. "Sir," was his unceremonious address, "do you know anything of my master?"

"I!" cried Mr. Piggott, when he had recovered his surprise, and speaking from the midst of his bed-clothes. "I do not. Why?"

"I thought you might know, sir, as you took him out last night. He said he was going to play with you and Colonel Haughton. He has not returned home, which I think very strange; and, as there is some important business waiting for him, I want to find him."

Reuben spoke out freely. But the "important business" was but an invention. He did not care to betray how uneasy he was, yet wanted an excuse for enquiring. Poor man! the fate of his early master lay ominously on his mind.

"He left us last night between twelve and one o'clock; to go home, as I suppose," said Mr. Piggott, somewhat taken to.

"Between twelve and one, sir?"

"Close upon one it may have been; it had not struck. I know nothing more."

"Did he go home with Colonel Haughton?"

"That I am sure he did not. Colonel Haughton and I walked away together. I left the Colonel at his own door."

"Away from Jermyn Street, I suppose you mean, sir?"

"You have no right to suppose any thing of the kind," roared Mr. Piggott, aroused to anger. "What is it to you? Go out, and shut the door."

Reuben did as he was bid ; there seemed to be no use in staying. He sought out Colonel Haughton, who (remembering past events) was civil, and who possibly felt some undefined uneasiness at the disappearance of Robert. His story was the same as Piggott's—that the young man had left them a little before one o'clock.

Trusting these gentlemen just as far as he could see them and no farther, or their word either, Reuben went to the gambling-house in Jermyn Street. After some difficulty—for every impediment seemed put in the way of every inquiry ; and, to judge by appearances, the place might have been the most innocent in the world—Reuben found a man attached to the house who knew Mr. Dalrymple. This man happened to be at the front door when Mr. Dalrymple went out the previous night ; it wanted about five or ten minutes to one. He watched him walk away.

“Which way did he go?” asked Reuben. “Towards home—South Audley Street?”

“No, the other way. He staggered a bit, as if not quite sober.”

“Through the machinations of the wicked people that have been hunting him ; he never drank but when incited to it by them,” spoke Reuben, in his pain.

Back he went to South Audley Street, in the hope that his master might have now reached it. Not so. The day wore on, and he did not come. Reuben was half distracted. In the evening he went to various police stations, and told his tale—his master, Mr. Robert Dalrymple, had disappeared. It may, perhaps, seem to you, reader, that all this was premature ; hardly called for ; but the faithful old servant's state of mind must plead his excuse.

Another night passed. Sunday morning arose, and then tidings came of Robert and his probable fate. The police had been making enquiries, and one of them came to Reuben.

A hat had been found in the Thames the previous day, floating away with the tide. Inside it was written “R. Dalrymple.” The policeman had it in his hand ; bringing it to Reuben to be owned or disowned. Reuben recognised it in a moment. It was the one his unfortunate master had worn on Friday night. How could it have got in the water?—and where, then, was Robert Dalrymple?

Little need to speculate. Some bargemen who were in their vessel, lying close to the side of Westminster Bridge, had disclosed to the police that about two o'clock on Saturday morning they had heard a weight drop into the water, seemingly from the bridge—“as if,” said one of them, “a body had thrown himself right on to the Thames o' purpose to make a hole in it.”

It was this disastrous news that Reuben had now brought to Mr. Grubb. That gentleman sat aghast as he listened. The old man, seated opposite to him, broke down with a burst of anguish as he concluded, the salt tears raining on his cheeks.

“Can he have wilfully destroyed himself?” breathed Mr. Grubb.

"Only too sure, sir ; only too sure."

"And the motive ? Embarrassment ?"

"Not a doubt of it, sir ; he was quite ruined."

"If he had but applied to me !—if he had but applied to me !" bewailed Mr. Grubb, rising from his chair to pace the room in excitement. "I would have saved and helped him."

"A dreadful set had got hold of him, poor young man," sobbed Reuben. "The same gamblers—one of 'em, at any rate—that got hold of and ruined his uncle. Doubtless you know that story, sir. On this last Friday evening that ever was, I told it to Mr. Robert, hoping it would turn him back. But those wretched men had got too fast hold upon him. One was waiting for him outside in the street then. My belief is, sir, he *couldn't* break with them."

"Had the tale no effect upon him ?"

"Some little it had ; not enough. He must go forth to play that night, he said to me ; he had given his word to Piggott to go, and, besides, he thought the luck would turn and favour him ; but, once the night was over, he would know that Haughton and the rest of the set no more. And I think he would have kept his word, sir."

"I suppose luck did not favour him ? That shall, if possible, be ascertained."

Reuben shook his head. "No need to doubt, sir. The worst is—the worst is—I hardly like to say it."

"Can anything be *worse*, Reuben, than what you have told me ?" was Mr. Grubb's sad rejoinder, as he took his seat again.

"Ay, but I meant as to his means, sir ; his losses. He was quite cleared out ; he told me that ; everything, including Moat Grange, so far as his life interest in it went, was staked and gone. But that last night"—Reuben's voice dropped to a dread whisper—"he took out with him what was not his to stake. And, no doubt, lost it."

"What was it ?" questioned Mr. Grubb, in the same hushed tone, feeling rather at sea, yet afraid of he knew not what.

"It was a cheque that had come up that morning from Netherleigh. Farmer Lee wanted some money invested in some particular security, and he got my master to undertake to do it for him, to save himself the journey up. Mr. Robert had told me all about it—he mostly did tell me things. Ah, sir, his disposition was open and generous as the day."

"And the money came ?"

"The cheque came, sir. It was for five hundred pounds. Piggott called that Friday afternoon and scented the cheque ; saw it, most likely. He took Mr. Robert out to dinner, and plied him with wine, and between ten and eleven he brought him back again, staying outside while my master came in—came in for the cheque. It was then I tried to pull him up by telling him about his Uncle Claude—how the man Haughton had lured Mr. Claude to his destruction, just as he was now luring Mr. Robert. He said he would have no more to

do with Houghton after that night ; but he went out to Piggott with the cheque in his pocket, and they walked away together arm-in-arm."

Mr. Grubb took out his pocket-book, and made a note in pencil. He would get that cheque back from the gamblers if possible. At any rate he would have a good try for it.

Reuben had not much more to tell. Mr. Grubb put on his hat and went with him to see the police inspector who had the case in hand. It was a terrible blow : Francis Grubb was feeling it to be so—and what then would it be to his sister Mary ?

The inspector pointed out to Mr. Grubb that, in spite of the finding of the hat in the Thames, which hat was, beyond all doubt, Mr. Dalrymple's, it did not follow that Mr. Dalrymple was himself in the Thames ; and the splash heard by the men in the barge might have been made by anybody else. There was no proof, he urged, that Mr. Dalrymple had been on Westminster Bridge, or near it. And all this seemed so reasonable that Mr. Grubb felt his heart's weight somewhat lightened.

But, ere the Sunday afternoon closed in, testimony on this point was forthcoming, and rather singularly. It chanced that a man, named Horn, who was an assistant to Robert Dalrymple's tailor, and had often measured Robert for clothes, was spending the Sunday with some friends at South Lambeth. Horn, a very respectable and steady man, had stayed late, for it was a wedding feast, beyond the time of omnibuses, and had to walk home to his lodgings near Leicester Square. In passing over Westminster Bridge, it was then close upon two o'clock, he saw some one mounted on the top, leaning right over the parapet, *hanging* over it, as if he had a mind to fling himself into the water. Horn, startled at the sight, ran up, and pulled the man back ; and then to his unbounded astonishment, he found it was Mr. Dalrymple.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said in apology. "I had no idea it was you."

"Good night, Horn," replied Robert. "Good night, sir," returned Horn ; and walked on.

But Horn felt uneasy ; especially so at the remembrance of Mr. Dalrymple's face, for it looked full of trouble ; and he turned back again. Robert was then standing with his arms folded, apparently looking down quietly on the water.

"Can I do anything for you, sir ?" he asked. "Nothing has happened, I hope ?"

"Oh, nothing at all," replied Robert. "I don't want anything done ; thank you all the same, Horn. The night is warm, and I am enjoying the air : one gets it here, if anywhere. Good night."

Joseph Horn wished him good night again and walked finally away. On this day, Sunday, chancing to hear that Mr. Dalrymple was missing—for enquiries were now being made extensively—he came forward and related this.

It was just the one link that had been wanting. Poor Robert Dalrymple, utterly ruined, soon now to be pointed at as a felon, had found his trouble greater than he could bear, and had put an end to it. Of that there could exist no reasonable doubt. The melancholy tale soon fled over London—how quickly such news does fly! Robert Dalrymple had drowned himself—another victim to Play.

“It runs in the family,” quoth some careless people who remembered the former catastrophe. “Like uncle, like nephew! The name of Dalrymple must be a fated one.”

“I would at least have used a pistol, and gone out of the world like a gentleman,” was the bad remark of that bad man, Colonel Haughton, as he stood on the Sunday night—yes, the Sunday night—and listened to the news in that place with the hot name.

But the Colonel changed his tone the following day, when Francis Grubb, the great East India merchant, whom all men, high and low, looked up to and respected, stood before him, and quietly informed him he must give up a certain cheque belonging to Mr. Lee of Netherleigh, or its value if it had been cashed; give it up, or submit to appear before a magistrate, and run the gauntlet of public exposure. After putting himself to a great deal of trouble, in the way of remonstrance, excuse, and grumbling, to which Mr. Grubb made no sort of reply, as he calmly waited the result, the Colonel returned the cheque—which had not been cashed. Possibly the disappearance of Robert Dalrymple had put him and Mr. Piggott on their guard.

Meanwhile the Grange remained in ignorance of what was passing; but the terrible tidings would soon have to be carried thither.

When Mrs. Dalrymple returned home on Friday evening from dining at Court Netherleigh, she did not say much to Oscar about her son; but on the following morning, after breakfast, Oscar having slept at the Grange, she questioned him. Without making exactly the worst of it, Oscar disclosed the worst—that is, that Robert was undoubtedly falling into trouble through his gambling habits. He deemed it lay in his duty to tell this; and Mrs. Dalrymple, as the reader must remember, had been already warned by Reuben’s letter. That letter had been a great shock to her; she knew how fatal the vice had already proved in the family.

It was a lovely midsummer morning, and she and Selina were sitting on the bench under the great elm tree. The bees were humming, the butterflies sporting, the birds singing around them. The grass was green; overhead the blue sky could be seen through the branches of the flickering trees. Oscar leaned against the trunk of an opposite tree as he talked to them.

“What can be done?—what *can* be done?” exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple, clasping her hands in distress. “Oscar, you ought to have brought him down with you.”

“He positively refused to come. I might as well have tried to oring a mountain. Something ought to be done, and must be done,”

added Oscar ; "you are quite right in saying that. The question is—what is it that can be?"

"The root of the evil lies in his having gone to London," said Mrs. Dalrymple. "He ought to have taken up his own proper station here, and ourselves have found a house elsewhere. But, in his chivalrous affection for me, Robert would listen to no remonstrance ; some implied promise to his father, when he was on his death-bed, I believe, swayed him. Robert was always so good-hearted—and so impulsive. He—here is Alice," she broke off, in a lowered tone.

Alice, with her sweet face, her slight figure, and her quite perceptible limp, came across the grass. "May I not be admitted to the conference?" she asked, in a pleading tone. "I know you are talking of Robert."

"Oh, my dear, it is nothing that you need trouble yourself about," said her mother, soothingly. "Go back to your tatting."

"I have my tatting with me. Mamma—Oscar—do you not see that it will be *well* for me to hear what there is to hear. I know something is wrong about Robert ; I could not sleep all last night, no, nor the night before, for dwelling on it. Whatever there is to hear, it cannot make me more anxious than I am—and it would end the suspense."

"Well, well, sit down," said Mrs. Dalrymple, giving way. "I hardly know myself how much or how little of evil there is to hear, Alice." And she went on to speak without reservation : "Robert had fallen into gambling habits ; and there was no telling how deeply. All his own means were undoubtedly gone. Of course things must get worse night by night," she concluded. "Any night he may stake the Grange."

"Stake the Grange!" echoed Alice. "Mamma, what do you mean?"

"Stake it and lose it," confirmed Oscar. "When the mania for play sets in on a man, he is not content to confine his ventures to trifles."

"But I do not understand," returned Alice. "How could he stake the Grange? It is in the Dalrymple family, and cannot go out of it."

"He might stake its value. Mortgage it, that is, for his own life."

"And could we not remain in it?" she quickly asked.

"Scarcely. It might take every shilling of its in-comings to pay off the interest. You could not remain here upon nothing."

"Would it be sacrificed ; useless to us for so long as Robert lived?" questioned Selina, not quite comprehending.

Oscar nodded. "I am only saying that he might do it : I do not say he will. He might so hamper himself, so involve the estate, that he could never derive further benefit from it. Or his family either, so long as he lived."

"Does it return to us at Robert's death? I wish to goodness he would be more careful of himself," added Selina, in her quick way. "Sitting up till daylight, night after night, cannot be good for him."

"It——would return into the family," spoke Oscar, hesitatingly.

Alice Dalrymple looked up from a reverie. A contingency had occurred to her which she had never thought of before: so entirely had the Grange been theirs, in their father's recent lifetime, and in the certainty of its descending to Robert afterwards. "Suppose anything were to happen to Robert," she said, "whose would the Grange be? Mamma's?"

No one answered her.

"Oscar, I ask you, would it go to mamma?"

"No." •

"To whom, then?"

"My dear," interposed Mrs. Dalrymple, "it would be Oscar's. It goes in the male line."

The answer took both the young ladies by surprise. They were really very ignorant of these matters. Each of them stole a glance at Oscar: a red, conscious light had flown into his usually pale cheek.

"I *never* knew it," breathed Selina.

"And it is of little import your knowing it now," gently spoke Oscar. "I am as likely to come into the Grange as I am to be made prime minister. Robert is a younger man than I am."

"Poor Robert!" lamented Alice. "He has been left to himself up in that great wicked town, he has had nobody to turn to for advice or counsel, and I daresay he has only done what he has done from thoughtlessness. A word from mamma may set him right. Mamma, do you not think you ought to go to him?"

"Yes, Alice. It is what I have been resolving to do, now, as you were talking. And you must stay here over to-morrow, and go with me, Oscar. We will start by the nine o'clock train on Monday morning."

"So be it," acquiesced Oscar. "It is the only thing. He may listen to you."

So Oscar Dalrymple stayed with them at the Grange until the Monday, revelling in the society of the one only being he loved on earth—Selina.

Mrs. Dalrymple had made ready for the journey—and how fervent, how imploringly earnest her prayers were that it might bear happy fruit, she and heaven alone knew. They all sat down to an early breakfast: even Alice, whose lameness was an apology for not rising betimes in general. In the midst of breakfast James came in, and looked at Oscar Dalrymple.

"Will you please to step here, sir, for a minute?"

"What for?"

"Just for a minute, sir," repeated the man; and his eyes seemed to telegraph a momentary entreaty with the words.

Oscar went out hurriedly, for there was no time to spare, and the carriage to take them to the station had already come round. James shut the door.

"Here's Reuben come down, sir, by the early train," he whispered. "He told me to fetch you out to him, quietly, but not to say who it was."

Oscar walked quickly across the hall. Reuben awaited him in an empty room.

"What is it, Reuben? What has brought you from town?"

The old servant trembled with agitation, and grasped hold of the back of a chair. "Oh, Mr. Oscar, it is all over. My poor young master is gone."

Oscar sat down, seemingly unconscious what he did, and the red light came again into his cheeks.

"The very night after you left London, sir, those men drew him out again. Before he went I spoke to him, trying to stop him, and he told me he was ruined and worse than ruined. He never came back. He has just followed in the steps of Mr. Claude Dalrymple, and has met with the same fate."

"Surely he has not destroyed himself?" breathed Oscar.

"He has; he has."

"But how? In what manner?"

"By drowning, sir. He jumped over Westminster Bridge right into the water during that same night. About two o'clock, they say. Oh, what distraction his poor mind must have been in, to urge him to such a death as that!"

Oscar rose and looked from the window. Cold as was his nature, the news could not fail to shock him—although he was the inheritor.

"Has he been found?" he presently asked.

"No. Perhaps never will be. The officers say that not half the bodies that get into the Thames ever see the light again. But his fate is as sure and certain, sir, as though he had been found, and the drags are yet at work. Mr. Oscar, I'd rather it was my own death that had to be told of than his," added Reuben, breaking into sobs.

"It is sad indeed," cried Oscar, feeling, truth to say, terribly cut up. "I and Mrs. Dalrymple were on the point of starting for London. It is no use to go now. At least she must not."

"His hat was found in the Thames," said poor Reuben, regaining some composure; "and, curious to say, one Joseph Horn, a young man, who——"

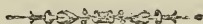
"Oscar," called out the voice of Mrs. Dalrymple, "where are you? We have not any more time to spare."

"How shall I break it to them?" wailed Oscar to himself, knowing that it must be done, and without delay. "It is a terrible mission. Reuben, don't show yourself for a minute."

He walked across the hall, *now his own*, and re-entered the breakfast-room. He proceeded with his task as well as he could, and got through it, not telling them the worst, only that some accident had happened to Robert. By intuition, however, they seemed to seize on the truth—that he was dead. Oscar felt almost thankful that Alice fainted and fell to the floor, because it caused some diversion to Mrs. Dalrymple's deathlike shock.

And, ere the mid-day sun was at its height, the estate was ringing with the news that its generous young landlord had passed away, with his faults and follies, and that Oscar Dalrymple would reign at the Grange.

(To be continued.)



TWO JOURNEYS.

"I go on a journey far away,"

He said—and he stooped and kissed me then

"Over the ocean for many a day—

Good-bye," and he kissed me once again.

But only a few short months had fled,

When again I answered my husband's kiss :

"I could not tarry away," he said ;

"There is never a land as fair as this."

Again I stood by my husband's side.

"I go on a journey, sweet, to-day ;

Over the river the boatmen glide—

Good-bye ; I shall linger long away."

"Ah, he will come back soon, I know,"

I said, as I stooped for the parting kiss ;

"He cannot tarry, he told me so.

There is never a land so fair as this."

But many a month and many a year

Have flown since my darling went away.

Will he never come back to meet me here ?

Has he found the region of perfect day ?

Over the ocean he went and came ;

Over the river, and lingers there !

Oh, pallid boatman ! call my name—

Show me the region so wondrous fair.

FORRESTER'S LODGER.

BY MARY E. PENN, AUTHOR OF "OLD VANDERHAVEN'S WILL," ETC.

IT was a bright genial afternoon in early spring. The adventurous sunbeams had succeeded in piercing the canopy of smoke which hung over busy Hammerton, and were exploring every nook and corner of its crowded thoroughfares. Some of them found their way into a certain "long, unlovely street" in the outskirts of the town, and lighted up the windows of a row of humble little red brick houses, which were frowned upon by the high wall of a great iron-foundry opposite.

On the step of Number Three stood Mary Forrester. She was a slender girl of nineteen, with chestnut hair, falling in loose waves over her forehead; a clear colourless complexion, a small grave mouth, and a pair of soft brown eyes, that looked at the world with a pathetic sort of perplexity, as if its ways bewildered her.

She had her work in her hand, but she was not sewing. Her eyes were fixed on the strip of blue sky above the foundry wall. She could not have told why the sight of that turquoise gleam, and the breath of the soft spring breeze on her face, should make her feel vaguely sorrowful; but so it was, and unconsciously she sighed as she resumed her work.

Presently the sound of approaching footsteps made her look up again. Two figures were advancing in the middle of the dusty road—a young man, and a little boy whom he led by the hand.

She looked at them curiously. They were strangers, she saw at a glance, and of a type not common in Foundry Street. The man, who was dressed in a suit of rough gray tweed and a felt hat, was a tall, well-built young fellow of five or six-and-twenty, with a sunburnt complexion, pleasant, frank blue eyes, and short brown beard and moustache.

It was not he, however, but the child who absorbed her attention, and brought the look of wondering admiration to her face. Never out of a picture had she seen anything so lovely as this little fellow, with his velvety dark eyes, half hidden by their long lashes, his clear, olive skin with its rich dusky bloom, his full smiling lips, red as coral, and the short silky curls that clustered over his forehead.

They came slowly on up the street, the stranger looking straight before him, as if his thoughts were elsewhere, the boy noticing everything, and commenting on the unfamiliar objects in a continuous ripple of exclamation and inquiry. His bright little person seemed to light up the street like a sunbeam. As they were passing the house, his eyes suddenly encountered those of Mary Forrester, fixed upon him in a gaze of rapt admiration,

He loosened his hand from his father's and stopped short, returning her look with one of interest and curiosity. Then his lips broke into a smile, and he babbled something which she did not understand; it was in a strange language, soft and musical. However, she smiled and nodded at a venture, whereupon he laughed all over his little gipsy face, and putting the tips of five dimpled fingers to his lips, kissed his hand to her. Mary's heart went out to him.

"Oh, the sweet little lad!" she exclaimed aloud, and extended her hand with a gesture of invitation, to which he at once responded. The father, who had been watching this little scene with a smile of amusement, now approached her.

"I think you have bewitched my boy," he said, pleasantly; "he is not usually so ready to make friends."

"I am sure he has bewitched me," she answered, as she bent to kiss him; "but I don't understand what he says. Is it French?"

"No, Italian. He was born in Italy, and has not yet learnt to speak English properly, though he is beginning to understand it. Come, Tonio!"

She reluctantly released the little hand which clung to hers.

"I dare say you will see him again," the father said. "We shall often pass this way if I succeed in finding rooms in this neighbourhood."

"We have a room to let in our house," she told him, timidly.

He glanced at the house and the street, and made a sort of grimace, but her wistful look at the child touched him.

"May I see it?" he asked, after a moment's hesitation. "It would be convenient for me to be so near my work."

Mary, who had turned to enter the house, stopped short and looked at him. "You are not a working-man!" she remarked.

He laughed. "I don't know what else to call myself. I am a machinist, and have an engagement at the Works yonder."

She still looked at him half incredulously. "You are not like our Hammerton working-folks. You haven't their looks or their speech."

"I suppose I haven't been here long enough to catch them. I only arrived this morning, coming from Glasgow."

Mary said no more, but led the way into the house. Her visitor looked round as if agreeably surprised. The little kitchen into which she ushered him was humble enough, certainly, with its brick floor and gaily-papered walls, but it had a pleasant, homelike look, and there were some attempts at adornment, in the shape of plants in the window-sill, prints and photographs over the mantel-piece, and a hanging shelf containing books, which seemed to have been well read.

"Are these yours?" he asked, looking at the titles. "Are you fond of reading?"

"Yes, very. Those were my mother's books. There were a good many others, but my father — but they are gone. Will you come upstairs?"

Carrying little Tonio, who refused to be separated from his new friend, she preceded him up the steep, narrow staircase to a bed-room on the first floor.

"It looks dull now," she said, apologetically, drawing up the blind, "but it has the morning light upon it. The sun rises just over there."

"Are you ever awake at sunrise?"

"Often, in summer. I like to sit at the window, and watch the stars fading and the light getting brighter. The air is so clear before the chimneys begin to smoke, and everything is so still—so still, and the sky is all gold and rose colour. It is beautiful and yet sad, somehow."

He looked at her curiously. "Nature is never sad, whatever poets say," he remarked. "The sadness is in the eyes that look at her."

"Ay, maybe it is," she acquiesced. "Do you think this room will suit you?"

"I should be hard to please if it didn't. The question is—shall I suit you for a lodger? You see there is no one to look after my boy while I am at work, and ——"

"Has he no mother?" she interrupted, in a compassionate undertone.

"No," he answered shortly, with a sudden darkening of his face, which altered its whole expression. "Perhaps you will find it troublesome to have him on your hands all day?"

"Troublesome? I should love to take care of him, and I believe he would be happy with me."

After a little further conversation, during which the question of terms was settled to their mutual satisfaction, Mary's new lodger betook himself to the station to fetch his "traps," leaving Tonio perfectly contented in her charge.

The young man was absent about an hour, returning in a cab with his belongings. As it approached the house his ear was struck by a confusion of sounds within—a scuffling of feet on the floor, a man's rough voice raised in anger, a woman's subdued and imploring. A little group of neighbours had gathered outside the door.

"Forrester's at his old ways again," he heard one woman say; "he'll be the death of the girl some day."

"What is it? what has happened?" he asked anxiously, as he alighted. They stared at him without replying, and drew back to allow him to pass in. This was the scene which met his eyes as he entered the kitchen. Mary, flushed and dishevelled, was struggling in the grasp of a man whose heavy hand had just descended on her shoulders, and was raised to repeat the blow.

On this group the new lodger burst like a whirlwind, and seizing her assailant by the collar, flung him across the room with so little ceremony that he stumbled and measured his length on the floor.

"Brute!" the young man panted, out of breath with exertion, and

in a white heat of indignation and disgust. "Who is this man?" he demanded, turning to the girl, who leaned against the wall, white to the lips and trembling from head to foot.

"My father," was the almost inaudible reply.

Forrester—who was only half sober—was on his feet in a moment, but seemed too astonished by the sudden attack to retaliate.

"Who is this man?" he echoed, parodying the other's tone, and measuring him with what was intended for a haughty stare.

"My name is Stephen Lydiard, and I was to have had the honour of being your lodger; but after this ——"

An imploring gesture from Mary arrested the words on his lips.

"You must be friends with Mr. Lydiard, father," she pleaded timidly; "he didn't know who you were, or he wouldn't ——"

"Have knocked me down in my own house," her father put in, with a short, gruff laugh. "Very considerate of Mr. Lydiard."

"But you won't bear malice?" she persisted. "You'll shake hands with him?"

"I bear no malice—oh, no, that is not my character," was the reply, though the glance he threw at her protector rather belied his words. "I am ready to shake hands, if Mr. Lydiard wishes it."

After a moment's hesitation the latter complied, with a slight shrug. "Don't strike your daughter again while I am in the house," he said, quietly, as their hands met, "or you'll receive a lesson you will not soon forget."

"I shall not soon forget this one," was the muttered reply, as he took up his hat and slouched out at the door.

"Try to keep friends with my father," Mary said anxiously, when they were alone; "don't interfere between us again."

"Not when I see you ill-treated?"

"It doesn't matter; I'm used to it."

"Used to it!" he echoed compassionately. "My poor child, what a life yours must have been!"

She smiled tremulously, and glanced at him with a sort of wistful wonder. Sympathy was so strange and so sweet.

"What was it all about just now?" he asked, after a moment's silence. "Why was he so angry?"

She coloured and turned her head aside. "Don't ask me; I'm ashamed to tell you."

"Pray do—I want to know."

"Well—it was because—because I hadn't asked you twice as much for the room as it was worth."

"Was that all? I will pay you double with pleasure, if ——"

"No," she interrupted; "you must not. And if he asks you for money you must refuse—he would only spend it at the 'Silver Cup.' You will stay with us?" she continued. "While you are here I shall feel that I have one friend in the world."

"Only one? Surely you have others?"

"The neighbours are kind in their way, and I know they are sorry for me, but ——"

She shook her head, and left the sentence unfinished.

"I will stay if it will make you happier," he said, in his kind cordial tones, "and I will be your firm and faithful friend. But I have something to ask you in return."

He lifted his boy on to the table between them, and taking the little olive face in his hands, gazed at it a moment with a troubled, anxious fondness that was strangely touched with dread.

"Is it something about the child?" she asked.

"Yes. If I give him into your keeping, you must promise never to let him out of your sight while I am away—never under any pretext to trust him with a stranger. There is a reason for this which I will tell you some day, but not now."

"You may rely on me," she said, earnestly. "I will guard him well."

Mary went to sleep that night with a heart lighter than it had been for many a day. On the dark horizon of her life a ray of dawn had appeared at last.

Stephen Lydiard's life in his new quarters proved pleasanter than might have been expected from its unpromising commencement. His landlord kept out of the way as much as possible, though when they did meet he behaved with studied civility. Stephen was well aware, however, that he had neither forgotten nor forgiven their encounter, and would probably make reprisals if an opportunity occurred.

As for Mary, never had she been so happy. Friendship and sympathy brightened her life and warmed her lonely heart.

Tonio was the wonder and admiration of the neighbourhood, and his daily promenades were quite a triumphal progress. He accepted the public homage graciously enough, but in a cool, imperial manner, as merely a tribute that was his due, showing no marked preference for anyone but Mary, who repaid his affection with boundless devotion.

The days crept by, getting warmer and longer. Blustering March and fickle April were past, and May came smiling in. One evening, on returning from the foundry, Stephen threw into Mary's lap a bunch of flowers he had just bought in the street.

"A message from the country, to tell you that summer is coming," he said. She was seated at work, with Tonio at her feet, and raised the flowers to her face with a deep breath of delight.

"How sweet! and how beautiful the country must be looking now! I haven't seen it for—not since the day I ran away from home."

"You ran away?" he repeated, as he took a seat opposite to her and lifted the child on to his knee. "When was that?"

She looked down, tracing figures on the table with the point of her

scissors. "It was nearly four years ago: not long after my mother died. I was so miserable at home. Father—— Well, never mind," she broke off. "One morning—it was in the early autumn—I left the house, meaning never to return. When I got away from the town I walked on and on, along the country roads, not caring where they led me, till, late in the afternoon, I found myself on the borders of a great common. It was Fernleigh Heath. Have you ever been there?"

He shook his head.

"It is a beautiful place—so wild and free. It stretches away as far as you can see, with the blue sky coming right down on every side, and the furze-bloom shining yellow as gold. I wandered about till dark, then lay down in a hollow, and went to sleep. It was so strange to wake in the night, and find nothing between me and the stars, which seemed like millions of bright eyes looking down at me."

"Were you not afraid?"

"No, but I had the strangest feeling—as if—as if I had died and come to life again in another world, where there was no such thing as sorrow, or anger, or pain. My heart had been full of bitterness when I went to sleep, but it had all died away in the beautiful solemn stillness. I fancied mother was looking down at me, telling me to go home and do my duty, as she had done hers till she died."

Her voice faltered, and she put her hand to her eyes.

"And you went home?" he said gently, after a pause.

"Yes, I started directly it was light, and reached home in time to get father's dinner," she answered, smiling. "I have often thought I should like to see the heath again," she concluded, as she resumed her work.

"You shall," he responded. "We will spend a day there—you and I and the little one."

She clasped her hands rapturously.

"Oh, do you mean it? When shall we go?"

"To-day is Saturday; why not to-morrow? We can go by an early train, and take our dinner with us."

And so it was settled, and she at once began her preparations for the excursion, glancing anxiously at the sky now and then, to see if it promised fine weather for the morrow.

The next day proved all that could be desired—sunny, clear, and cloudless—with only just enough breeze to give freshness to the air.

"Why, Mary, you are dazzling!" was Stephen's exclamation, as she made her appearance after breakfast in all the glory of a freshly-trimmed hat, with a bunch of primroses in her dress. "And how ——"

He paused, looking at her as she bent to put on Tonio's hat.

"And how very pretty you look," he concluded.

She glanced up at him as if doubting whether she had heard correctly, but something in his eyes—an expression she had never seen

there before—made her own droop, and suffused her cheeks with a warm colour.

Half an hour later they were being borne away from smoky Ham merton into the green and gracious country.

The breeze blew freshly through the open carriage windows, fluttering the ribbons in Mary's hat and the ends of Tonio's scarlet necktie. The child was in wild spirits, and chattered as merrily as a brook, with rippling bursts of laughter and little startled cries, as some unfamiliar object came in sight, and now and then a pause of silence and a deep sigh of measureless content. It was still early when they reached the quiet little town of Fernleigh-Coldfield, and the church bells were ringing for morning service.

Directly they emerged from the sunny, silent streets they found themselves on the borders of the heath. The soft wind swept over its wide expanse, dappling it with fleeting cloud-shadows, and bringing aromatic odours of broom and wild thyme. The larks were soaring and singing jubilantly, high up against the blue; the cuckoo's note came at intervals from a distant wood, and as they walked on the sound of church bells followed them, solemn and musical, like a benediction on the day.

Stephen was quieter than usual, and she fancied there was a change in his manner; a certain reserve which was not coldness, yet which seemed to put an unwonted distance between them. She would have feared she had offended him, but it was not displeasure she read in his eyes when they met her own.

When the bright day was waning towards afternoon, they sat to rest in the woods which bordered the heath. The slant sunbeams, low but clear, touched the mossy boughs with gold, and steeping through the young leaves, filled the space beneath with a soft green twilight. Now and then the fitful breeze shook the tree-tops and passed on; somewhere in the heart of the wood a thrush was singing his sweet, full-throated song.

They were sitting on a fallen tree; Tonio half asleep on his father's knee, his red lips pouted in a drowsy smile; the flowers he had gathered falling one by one from his relaxing grasp.

"What are you thinking of, Mary?" Stephen asked after a silence, turning towards her as she sat, with folded hands, looking down the vistas of the wood.

"I was thinking of the day, four years ago, when I came here alone. How different I feel now; how changed everything is!"

"Changed for the better, I hope. You are happier now, are you not?"

"Happier? I never knew what happiness was till—till you and the little one came."

"Why—what have we done for you, except give you trouble?" he asked, smiling, as he laid his hand on hers.

"More than you know; more than I can tell you," she replied,

softly. "My heart was withering for want of kindness ; all that was good in me was being crushed. I felt that I was getting hard and bitter ——"

"And no wonder," he put in.

"But your friendship saved me. From the very first day, when you spoke to me so gently, and the little lad put his arms round my neck, I felt—I——"

Her voice broke, she bent and hid her face on Tonio's curly head. Roused by the touch he stroked her cheek, then, suddenly raising himself, he drew his father's head down to the same level.

"Kiss Mary—poverina Mary !" he pleaded.

The young man laughingly resisted, but the little brown hands held him tight, and at length he complied, and laid his lips to hers. She trembled under the caress, and flushed to her forehead. For a moment his bronzed cheek caught the reflection of hers, then paled, and a look of pain, almost remorse, crossed his face.

Raising her eyes timidly, Mary caught that look and wondered at it. She felt a passing chill ; a vague uneasiness. It was the first shadow which had crossed the brightness of the day.

He was silent, looking down. Suddenly he raised his head.

"Mary," he began, abruptly, "I promised that I would tell you some day why I asked you to guard my boy so jealously. Have you never wondered ?"

"I thought you feared to have him stolen. You may have an enemy who ——"

"I have," he interrupted, "a bitter and dangerous one. And that enemy is—my wife."

"Your wife !" She started, looking up at him incredulously. "You said—you told me—she was dead."

"I said that my child had no mother," he corrected ; "and, indeed, he is worse than motherless. But my wife is not dead. May Heaven forgive me if I say that I would she were, or that I had been before I met her."

The girl could not speak ; she looked straight before her with eyes that saw nothing. She did not know what had come to her ; she felt suddenly cold and tired, and all the glory had departed from the day. At length she spoke, with an effort.

"Is she Italian ?"

"Yes. I first met her at Genoa, five years ago. I had been sent out to superintend the working of some new machinery in one of the velvet-weaving factories there. She was the foreman's daughter, and the loveliest woman I ever saw. I fell in love at first sight, and married her after three weeks' courtship, knowing absolutely nothing of her character and disposition. I paid a heavy price for my rashness. My beautiful wife had the temper of a fiend—violent, cruel, revengeful. For four miserable years she made my life a daily martyrdom. I should have been driven to despair—to crime, perhaps, but for my

child. His little white soul stood between me and ill. For his sake I bore with her, till I discovered—it makes me angry still to think of it—that he, too, was the victim of her evil temper. Returning unexpectedly one day, I found her beating him unmercifully for some childish fault. The sight of his pain maddened me to that degree that I lost all control over myself. For the first time—I struck her. I expected she would rave and storm at me. She said not a word, but she gave me a look I shall never forget, and I knew that from that moment my wife was my deadliest enemy. But I was not prepared for the revenge she took.”

“What was it?” his companion whispered.

“The very next day she quitted the house secretly, taking the child with her, and leaving a note to tell me that I should never see either her or him again. For two whole months I searched for her in vain; at length accident put me on her track. I traced her from place to place till I found her in Paris. She had gone on the stage, and already the city was ringing with her beauty.”

“And Tonio?”

“Tonio was with her, but so changed—such a poor little ghost of himself that I should hardly have known him if, when I entered the room where he was, he had not sprung towards me with a cry that went to my heart. His mother did not attempt to prevent me from taking him, but she warned me, mockingly, that though I had got him I should not keep him; sooner or later she would find him, and I should lose him when I least expected it. That was the last I saw of her. It is more than a year ago, but her threat has haunted me ever since.”

“Does she know where you are?” the girl asked, apprehensively.

“I think not—I hope not. She must have lost all trace of me when I went to Glasgow.”

Mary drew a deep breath, and looked down at the sleeping child. “Now you have told me this, I shall not know how to guard him carefully enough,” she said, tightening her hold upon the child.

“You cannot be more careful than you are,” was his reply; “while he is with you I feel secure. You have been a good angel, Mary, to me and to Tonio.” She sighed, and they were both silent. The thrush had finished his song, the daylight was fading fast.

“It is getting late,” Stephen said at last, looking round; “we must go. I will carry Tonio. Don’t forget the flowers.”

She looked down at them drearily. “They are dead,” she said.

“They will revive again in water.”

“No, they are quite dead,” she repeated, and left them lying on the ground.

Twilight was falling over the heath like a dusky curtain; earth and sky seemed darkening round them as they walked on, and the wind had an eerie sigh that threatened rain. They were both very silent on the homeward journey. When they reached Hammerton

Station a train from the North was just in, and the platform was thronged and bustling. They made their way through the crowd, and mounted the iron steps leading up to the bridge.

Stephen went first with the little boy. When he reached the bridge he looked round for his companion. She was leaning over the balustrade, looking down at the platform as if watching someone.

Presently she looked up, with a pale, startled face, and beckoned to him. "I thought I saw—her," she whispered.

"Saw who?"

"Your wife."

He stared at her. "My —— You are dreaming, Mary! How would you know her?"

"It was a dark, beautiful woman, with eyes like Tonio's, only fiercer. She was watching us—watching *you*. She stood just there, by the lamp. She is gone now."

Without waiting to hear more he hurried down the steps. In about five minutes he returned, out of breath.

"No signs of her, or of anyone like her," he said, in a tone of relief. "It was your fancy, Mary; you had been thinking of what I told you."

She said no more, but she seemed only half convinced, and glanced nervously over her shoulder more than once as they made their way home.

Rain fell steadily all the next day. Mary rose that morning feeling languid and depressed, vaguely dissatisfied with herself and her surroundings. She had never noticed before how dingy and dull the street was; it looked changed and unfamiliar somehow: or perhaps the change was in herself—she could not tell.

The hours wore away till it came to be dusk. Tonio, over-tired the previous day, fell asleep long before his usual bed-time. She carried him upstairs, and laid him, dressed as he was, in his little cot, close to her own bed. She stood a moment, shading the candle with her hand, and looking down at him as he lay—his little tired limbs curled up, his red lips parted, the ruffled curls falling over his brow. Then, pressing a soft kiss on his cheek, she went downstairs.

Having laid the table for supper, she took up her sewing, but found she could not work. She did not know what ailed her, or what was the meaning of the dull ache at her heart—a pain that was not all pain, but had a strange sort of bitter sweetness. Soon her work fell into her lap, her eyes grew fixed and dreamy.

She was sitting thus when the door opened. She glanced round, expecting to see Stephen Lydiard, but it was her father who entered. She looked at him curiously. There was an air of suppressed excitement about him which attracted her attention at once, and made her exclaim, before he could speak:

"Father, is anything the matter?"

He took off his hat and pushed back his hair ; he was flushed and out of breath.

"Matter enough. Lydiard's had an accident—been and hurt himself with the machinery. They told me to fetch you."

Mary started to her feet, every trace of colour fading from her face. "Oh—is he badly hurt? When did it happen?"

"Not ten minutes ago. Yes, it's a bad job, I'm afraid. He's been asking for you, they say."

She caught up her hat, and was over the threshold in a moment.

"Wait here till I come back," she said, over her shoulder.

"All right," he answered shortly, turning his back on her, as he took a seat near the hearth.

The entrance to the works was at the end of the street. When she reached it the day workers were just pouring out of the great archway. Mary caught hold of the first person she met.

"Where is Stephen Lydiard? Is he much hurt? How ——"

The words died on her lips. It was Lydiard himself who stood before her. "Why, Mary, don't you know me?" he asked, with a puzzled smile.

"Then you are not hurt? it was a mistake?" she said, bewilderedly.

"Who told you I was hurt?"

"Father. He must have been hoaxing me ; or else ——"

She started. A vague suspicion flashed across her mind. Without another word she darted from her companion's side, and ran home. Her father was sitting where she had left him. She did not stay to speak to him, but hurried upstairs to her own room. There was just light enough to show her that the cot was empty, and with a cry that rang through the house, she rushed downstairs again.

"The child—father, where is the child?" she cried, seizing his arm.

He looked her straight in the face with a defiant smile. "The child is where he ought to be—with his mother."

"His mother ——"

"Ay, and an uncommonly fine woman she is—worthy of a better husband. You may stare, I know all about it. She told me the whole story this afternoon. She saw you at the station last night, you know," he continued, nodding at her as he pressed some tobacco down in his pipe. "She was on her way from Glasgow, where she had been in search of him. She followed you home, and has been watching the house all day, on the sly. When I went out after dinner she spoke to me. We soon came to an understanding, both of us having an account to settle with your model lodger ——"

"And you found a pretext to get me out of the way while —— Ah, I understand. Father, what have you done?"

"Done a good action : paid off an old grudge, and earned a five-pound note, all at one stroke—not a bad day's work I call it."

He turned upon her with a look of triumph, which changed somewhat abruptly to one of apprehension when, glancing over his shoulder, he found that Stephen Lydiard had entered unperceived, and was standing behind them. His face showed that he had heard every word. Mary threw herself between the two men.

"It was my fault!" she cried, "I ought not to have left him. But I shall find him, never fear—she has not had time to go far, and I will make her give him up ——"

The next moment she was gone.

When he found himself alone with his lodger, the master of the house instinctively backed away, and put himself on the defensive. But for the moment Stephen was too much stunned by the blow to recollect what share the other had had in it.

"Which way did the woman turn when she left the house?" he asked hoarsely.

"Don't know—didn't look," was the dogged reply.

The young man saw it was useless wasting words upon him. He paused at the door a moment, looking right and left, then turned in the opposite direction to that which Mary had taken, and hurried away through the rainy dusk.

Evening had deepened into night before he returned, haggard with fatigue and anxiety, having found no trace of those he sought.

He had hoped that Mary would be more successful, and his heart beat fast as he opened the door. But he found the house empty, the kitchen only lighted by the glow of an expiring fire. Mr. Forrester had deemed it expedient to absent himself for a few hours.

He glanced round and shivered, not so much with cold as with a presentiment of some darker trouble in store. Where could Mary be? He feared—he hardly dared think what. He could not endure to be shut up in the dark and silent house. He lit a candle, made up the fire, and then went and stood at the door, looking anxiously up and down the street. The rain had ceased now, and a "wan and weary moon" peered out at intervals through the rents of the clouds, throwing a pale bluish gleam across the wet road.

At length one of these brief glimpses of light showed him an approaching figure, at sight of which his heart leaped with renewed hope. He watched it with straining eyes till hope became certainty, and Mary stood before him with Tonio at her side. Uttering an inarticulate exclamation of joy and relief, he drew her into the house and shut the door. The boy ran to his father's arms with a shrill glad cry—but Mary stood motionless and silent.

Wild and white, with the rain on her hair and the mud of the streets on her dress, her eyes dilated with a blank, stricken look, like one half stunned by a blow, she stood and looked at him. In the first moment he did not notice her expression, he only saw that she was there.

"Thank Heaven you are safe!" he exclaimed. "I feared—I

hardly know what. And you have found my darling and brought him back to me ! Oh, Mary, I have no words to thank you !”

She did not speak. She looked at him fixedly, forlornly, with her sorrowful dark eyes, but she said not a word.

The light died out of his face.

“What has happened ?” he asked, with a sudden change of tone, taking a step towards her. She drew back, putting the whole width of the room between them.

“Don’t ask me,” she said, in a voice unlike her own. “The child is safe—that is enough. I must go ; I dare not stay here.”

“Go !” he echoed ; “why —— Ah, what has happened ?”

She shuddered from head to foot, but made no answer, and turned abruptly away. Her hand was on the door, but he caught and detained her.

“Tell me—you must,” he said, in a quick, imperious whisper. “Was there a struggle between you ? did she ——”

She uttered a stifled cry, and snatching her hand from his grasp, crouched against the wall, hiding her face. Tonio crept up and clung to her, but she put him almost roughly aside.

“Take him away—don’t let him touch me,” she said hoarsely ; “let me go ! You don’t know —— I am in danger.”

“Then I must share it. It is for life and death between us, Mary. Tell me, is my wife ——”

He paused ; the look she raised to his face arrested the words on his lips. “She is dead,” the girl whispered.

He started and caught his breath ; for a moment he could not speak. “Dead ! But you—but she did not die by your hand —— ?”

She shivered, looking vaguely round her.

“Yes—no. It is all confused, like a horrible dream.”

“Try to tell me all,” he said, after a pause. “How and where did you find her ?”

“I saw her before me with Tonio in her arms when I had got a street’s length from the house, but I dared not stop her then, fearing that if there was a dispute between us the passers-by would take her part. I followed her through the town to an hotel near the Central Railway Station. I waited outside a few moments, then went in and asked for the foreign lady who had just come. The waiter took me upstairs to the door of the room where she was, and left me. She was bending over Tonio, trying to silence his sobs by shaking him. She did not see me till I was close to her, and before she could recover from her surprise I had him in my arms. But in a moment she rushed to the door and set her back against it. ‘I know you,’ she cried ; ‘you were with *him* last night. He has sent you ? Well, go back and tell him from me that he shall never see his child again—do you hear ? never.’ I made no answer, but tried to get to the door. ‘Stand back,’ she said ; ‘I warn you.’ And then I saw that she had a revolver in her hand. I put the child behind me, and

caught her wrist, trying to force it from her grasp. We struggled together desperately, without a sound. Suddenly—I don't know how it happened—there was a shot. She tossed her arms above her head with a terrible cry—and fell."

The girl paused, wiping her damp forehead.

"For a moment I could not move. I stood like one frozen. But there were voices and footsteps on the stairs. I took up the child again, and hurried from the room, and down a long corridor with a half glass door at the end. A flight of stairs led to the back entrance: I crossed a yard and found myself in another street. I ran on blindly through the dusk, not knowing where I went, and it was not till I was exhausted that I stopped. I had not been followed, but I dared not return home till it was dark, and I have been wandering about ever since."

She paused and pushed back her hair nervously, listening to some fancied sound outside. Stephen took her hand and compelled her to sit down. He was deadly pale, but calm and firm.

"You should not have fled," he said; "only the guilty need do that, and you are innocent. What happened was purely an accident ——"

"Yes," she returned, interrupting him, "but how would people know that—people who are always so ready to believe the worst?" she cried with a shudder. Folding her arms on the table, she let her forehead sink upon them wearily. Her excitement had given place to a dull feeling of indifference—a despairing resignation to whatever might befall her.

Her companion stood for a moment with his hand over his lips, looking down at her, his face stern with anxious thought. At length he touched her shoulder.

"Mary, I am going to that place to make inquiries."

"Yes," she answered, without raising her head.

"And you must stay here till I return. Do you hear?"

"Yes," she repeated in the same tone. "I will do anything you wish. After all, what does it matter what becomes of me?"

His face contracted with a look of pain. He bent till his lips brushed her drooping head.

"It matters so much to me," he whispered, "that I would gladly lay down my life to save you from harm. You know it, Mary—you know that I ——"

He checked himself. A host of eager words besieged his lips for utterance, but this was not the time to speak them.

The girl lifted her pale face with a sudden light upon it, and their hearts met in a look. Then he turned away and she hid her face on her arms again.

"I don't mind now," she thought, "whatever happens. I don't mind ——" But it was no longer the indifference of despair that possessed her. For one brief instant she had tasted life's supremest joy; let fate do what it might, it could not rob her of that moment.

Tonio was curled up on the hearth-rug, half asleep. His father carried him upstairs to his own room, and laid him on the bed, then left the house.

Moments lengthened into hours, the night wore itself out, and the intense coldness of coming dawn crept into the silent house. Still he did not return.

Mary never changed her position. Her limbs ached, her heart and brain felt numb. At length from sheer exhaustion she fell asleep. A hand on her shoulder, a voice in her ear, roused her suddenly from a troubled dream. Raising her head she found Stephen at her side.

She looked up at him in the bewilderment of a sudden awakening, oblivious for the moment of all that had happened.

As recollection returned, her eyes dilated with anxiety. His expression reassured her before he spoke.

"You have nothing to fear, nothing to reproach yourself with," he said, as he took a seat at her side.

"Then she is not ——" the girl began.

"Yes, she is dead," he answered gravely, "but she lived long enough to clear you from any shadow of blame. There was a priest with her when I arrived—she had asked for one—and to him she acknowledged that the shot was fired by accident when you were struggling together for the possession of the revolver."

His companion drew a deep breath of relief. She could not speak, but she put her hand on his, as it rested upon the table. His strong fingers closed over it with a warm, firm pressure; he looked at her with all his heart in his eyes.

"Mary," he said, suddenly, "you have risked your life for me and mine. Now—will you do something else for us?"

"What is there I would not do for you and yours?" she returned, looking up at him.

He put his arm round her and drew her to him, laying his bearded cheek against hers.

"Darling," he whispered, "I am free now to say to you what was on my lips a few hours ago. I may ask you to give into my keeping a treasure I cannot live without, now I know its worth."

"What is it?" she asked, with drooping eyes.

"Yourself," was the reply.

As he spoke he put her a little away from him, so that he could look into her face. Joy beamed in it, transfiguring every feature. She raised her eyes with a tremulous, happy smile.

"Do you really need me?" she questioned shyly; "you are quite sure? Then —— take me!"

And she laid her head upon his breast.

HIC JACET.

IN rosy light it lies, the earth its urn :
 Under the funeral pyre of dying day,
 Amid brown leaves and fern :
 The soul of fire, hath flitted far away.
 And the still clay, that cannot rise or turn,
 Content to stay
 Amid dead leaves and blossoms, day by day
 Fast moulders to decay.

Where two have met—a stone ;
 Where two have joyed—a sorrow.
 Where two have parted, all the way's o'ergrown
 With violets darkly blown ;
 And mosses borrow
 Fresh verdure from the dust of one that sleeps ;
 Where two have stood—one steals to weep alone,
 Here—where the night wind creeps.

In the moon's light it lies, no more to burn
 With pangs of baffled hope, or vain desire ;
 No more to learn
 In life's rude school, and of the lesson tire.
 From bush to bush the nightingales inquire,
 And answer one another in the calm ;
 The glow-worm glitters like a fairy fire,
 And shadowy arches of the wild rose briar
 Weep from their half closed blossoms tears of balm.

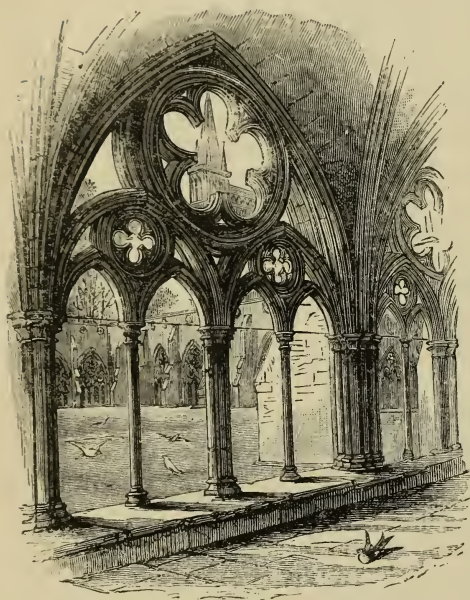
In darkness dull it lies,
 All that we prize—
 All that we seek to earn with sacrifice
 Of toil and tears,
 For many days and years,
 And clasp, and call our own, but cannot keep !—
 Frail as a dream of sleep,
 A cloud that flies,
 A flower that dies,
 Here lies.

C. M. GEMMER.

SALISBURY AND STONEHENGE:

A CONTRAST.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



THE CLOISTERS.

DRIVING through the New Forest district, but forsaking its finest parts; crossing lovely stretches of moorland, and giving opportunity to an east wind, if prevalent, to find you out; now passing through a primitive village, where country carts are in process of building, and men are turning, joining and hammering for their lives; and now rapidly descending a steep bit of hill, you at length reach Downton, a place of some slight interest to the antiquarian.

We were late for the train that morning, but not too late. We had traced the steam running through the country, and

the train had stopped at the station long before we were near it. The mare, as if willing to show us what stuff she was made of, dashed down the incline at a killing pace, and was up the station hill in what seemed less than no time. The station-master called out that we were too late; but before the train was on the move we were safely packed in, rugs, traps, and all, and the tickets brought to us. The *alter ego* in this instance was my good host of the Compton Arms, who, having occasion to visit Salisbury, had taken the opportunity of driving me so far on the road to do the remainder of the journey on his own account.

Before many minutes had elapsed, the famous spire of Salisbury came into view, and the train passed on to the platform. I now felt I had left behind me the New Forest and all its pleasant influences; its great solitudes, its glades and avenues, its wealth of autumn foliage. Once more I was in the midst of a bustling town, with long streets

and commonplace houses. Salisbury, like many of our cathedral towns, is ordinary enough in aspect, and beyond a few records and buildings of antiquity, has little of the beautiful in its outward form. It is situated at the confluence of three streams, the Avon, the Bourn, and the Wiley. Rattling through the streets in a hired fly—they were quiet enough, these streets, but seemed noisy and vulgar after the solitude and refining influence of the forest—I soon found myself at the White Hart. The hotel has the advantage of being near to the cathedral, though not in sight of it.

But if Salisbury itself is not far out of the common way, how much may it not boast in the beauty of this same cathedral! Far as the spire is visible, so far will its influence follow the traveller.

I went out after “settling down” at the White Hart; and, once through St. Anne’s Gateway, was immediately in the Close. Passing a few houses, old fashioned and dull looking, with the small-paned windows of a bygone generation, you at once come upon the cathedral from its finest point of view, the north-east. Everyone should seek for himself this first impression; said, by Rickman, to be the best general view of a cathedral to be had in England.

This opinion cannot be far wrong. The entire length of the building stands before you, one point opening and spreading above, and beyond another, until you stand delighted at the whole beauty of the fabric. If there be a defect it is at the juncture of the tower with the spire. There is a heaviness here not quite in keeping with the slender and singular perfection of the rest of the structure.

As a whole, perhaps no cathedral in England is so perfect, because so uniform. It is built of freestone obtained from neighbouring quarries. One of its characteristics is its lightness and yet dignity. Salisbury Cathedral has all the beauty of the pure Gothic, and betrays no sign of mixture with the solid and more massive Norman.

It was an evidence of good judgment on the part of the architect, the beginning of a happier era, for Salisbury was built at a period when a mixture of styles was prevalent, the Norman and the Gothic. Commenced in the year 1220, it was finished in 1258, and thus took 38 years in building, at a cost of 40,000 marks, or £27,000, representing in those days a far greater sum than it does in these.

The form of the cathedral—that of a double cross—stands out conspicuously as you gaze from the north-east end. Every detail comes into view: the porch, the pinnacles, the flying buttresses, the delicate pointed windows rising tier above tier, the outlines of the transepts, finally the tower with its beautiful tracery work, and above it the famed spire. The latter is octagonal, rises between four pinnacles, and is 400 feet high. It is said to be two feet out of the perpendicular, but has remained in the same condition for two centuries. The tower and spire were built at a later period, and it is easy to conceive that the exact proportions designed by the original architect were not strictly followed out.

Approaching the building, and gradually making way, one is surprised at the beauty and finish of the minutest detail. Nothing is in excess, and nothing is wanting. There is no elaboration of ornament to offend by attracting special attention, and on the other hand there is an absence of the severe plainness that is a defect in more than one of our cathedrals.

Working round to the west entrance, you stand in front of what is considered the gem of the building, and is certainly the most gorgeous and richly ornamented portion. It is exceedingly beautiful, but seemed less perfect, less imposing than the length view from east to west. It appeared somewhat too broad for its height, an effect unrelieved by the pinnacles at either end. But the doorways were exquisite, and the rich ornamentation of the whole façade demanded long and careful scrutiny.

Many of the figures in the numberless niches were missing; others had worn down their beauty with the lapse of time—the onward rolling of the ages. But if they had lost the comeliness of youth, they had gained all the immeasurably greater, because more refined, melancholy, and romantic beauty of antiquity. The triple west windows towered above the triple doorway in perfect harmony, and the slender pillars between were the perfection of grace and finish. These pillars, supporting and dividing all the windows on the exterior, are a marked feature in the structure, and prepare one for the beauty and multitude of the fluted pillars within.

It is an old saying that there are as many windows in Salisbury Cathedral as there are days in the year, as many pillars as there are hours. Thus runs the rhyme :—

"As many days as in one year there be,
So many windows in this church you see.
As many marble pillars here appear
As there are hours through the fleeting year.
As many gates as moons one here doth view :
Strange tale to tell, yet not more strange than true."

Whether this be fact or not, it would be a hard and a long task to count the windows and the pillars. On entering, the first thing to arrest attention is an effect of perfect and complete harmony. But the "dim religious light" that certainly appeals to the senses (and is so pleasant when merely taken for what it is, and forms no portion of the ritual of the service) is here missing. The great want that is at once felt is the absence of stained glass. Strangely beautiful is the whole interior, with its fluted pillars, its delicate arches, arch above arch—the beautiful triforium crowning the nave—its pointed windows and its Gothic roof; but how much more beautiful would it all be if streams of colour chequered the lights and shadows around, in place of the more open, garish day that is now perhaps only too conspicuous.

Once upon a time it possessed this advantage; but much of the

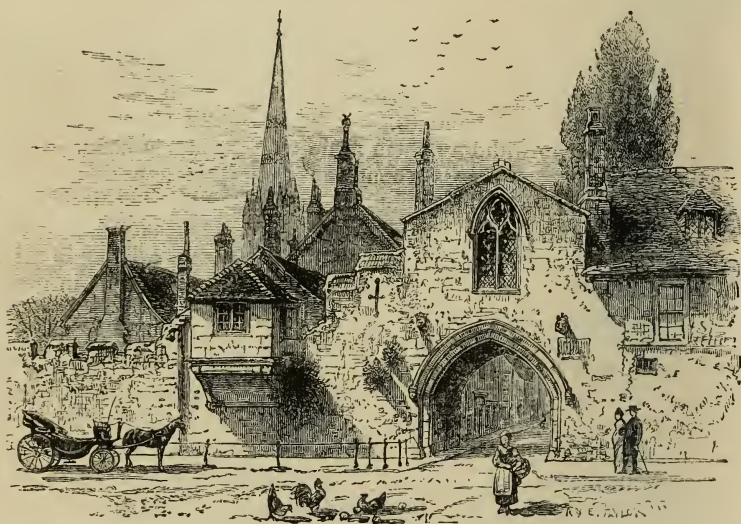
painted glass was first of all removed by Bishop Jewel at the time of the Reformation : and the work of destruction was completed under Bishop Barrington in 1782, by James Wyatt, when, it is said, cartload after cartload of stained glass was thrown into the city ditch. One could almost weep at reading of this barbarous proceeding—this wholesale loss of what never could be replaced. For, rather than disfigure the windows with much of our modern glass, it were better to lose the repose and effect of subdued tones than be offended with colours in which all repose would be lost. Wyatt followed up his work by destroying screens, choir, porches, tombs, and paintings, in his so-called work of restoration ; and when, at the end of nine years, there was nothing more to be done, his alterations were voted a vast improvement.

The choir, with the rest of the building, has again been recently restored. In some ways it has gained by the process, but not quite in all. This, perhaps, must ever be the case in all restorations of ancient and beautiful buildings, for Time seems only to give us favours in order to withdraw them again with unsparing hand. There was a certain gorgeousness about the choir that appealed to the senses, and was not unpleasant in its influence ; but it is only redeemed by simplicity of ritual ; the unobtrusive beauty, the having all things done “decently and in order,” happily still existing in most of our cathedrals, though fast giving way to the ceremonial in many of the churches of England.

Passing out at a small door on the south side, piloted by the polite verger, we were immediately in the cloisters, which are worthy of the cathedral. Few cloisters in the kingdom, perhaps, equal them. The pointed roof seemed to contract in the long vista of 181 feet, and the multiplied outlines of the Gothic windows, large and now unglazed, with their pointed arches, their quatrefoils and rosettes and intermediate buttresses, was especially imposing. In the enclosure, entirely covered with refreshingly green, well-kept grass, two sombre yew trees flourished. Beneath each was a grave, to-day covered with wreaths and crosses of hot-house flowers, a token that those who lay beneath had left hearts upon the earth to mourn their loss.

Turning to the left, we gained the chapter-house. Upon entering, this indeed strikes one as being almost the gem of the cathedral. Anything more beautiful than the exquisite proportions of the octagonal building could scarcely exist ; and, in the restoration, complete harmony of detail has been carried out. The richly-groined Gothic roof is supported by a slender pillar, whose shafts spread outward in graceful perfection. The large windows are ornamented by slender columns from the base to the commencement of each pointed arch, and the stained glass throws its subdued streams upon a tessellated pavement. Each window is divided into four lights, surmounted by two quatrefoils and one rosette. If the cathedral were only filled in like manner with stained glass how great would be the effect.

Re-entering the main building, service was about to commence, and in one of the choir stalls I waited in patience the striking of the hour. The choristers trooped up the long aisle and began robing behind a curtain. Then, from the organ, the sweetest strains imaginable went swelling and vibrating down the aisles and into the roof, supplying all that seemed wanting to the perfection of time and place. One seldom hears a finer instrument. When service was over the organist went on playing long after everyone had left the building, and I listened spellbound to the rising and falling, the swelling louder and louder yet, and then the dying away of strains that transported one from earth to paradise.

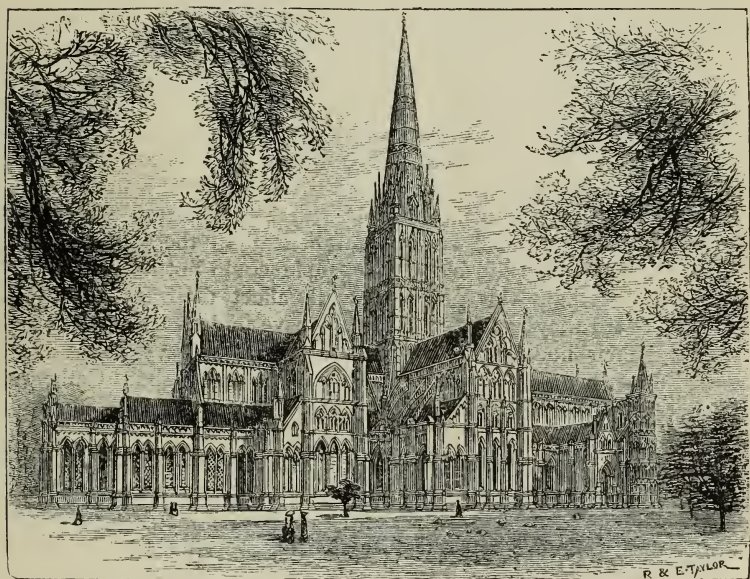


ST. ANNE'S GATEWAY.

At last I was brought back to realities by a touch upon the shoulder, and the civil verger behind me. He had done his duties, was about to lock up and depart, and thought I had better depart too, or I might risk being fastened in for the night. Much as one could but feel the beauty and influence of the place, the prospect of a whole night's meditation "among the tombs" was not tempting, and would have proved far too much of a good thing. It was cold enough now: the wind crept in at all corners and searched one out: very soon the shades of night would be falling, and this beautiful vision of an earthly tabernacle would dissolve to the sight like the baseless fabric of a dream: leaving nothing for companionship but the cruel wind, and, perhaps, an array of ghosts—though if anything will keep ghosts back it is surely an east wind.

So I followed the attentive verger all down the long aisles to the

west doorway, while the swelling strains of the organ rose and fell upon the air and floated upwards into space towards heaven. Until the door closed upon us, and the verger, with very matter-of-fact and unsentimental energy and promptitude, turned the lock, and pocketed the key, and went his way. Probably that way ended in nothing more romantic than a cosy room with a blazing hearth, a quiet tea-table and a comely helpmate : and probably he was as happy as if he had been born in the purple. As there is a wonderful power of adapting oneself to circumstances in the human mind, so in like manner, and in what would be a very marvellous manner if we



SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.

had the arranging of our own lots, does man for the most part suit his particular niche in the world. It is only the headstrong and perverse *round* man who, by wilfully turning aside and choosing his own path, finds himself at last in the *square* hole. But once there, oh, pity him from the very bottom of your heart ! Oh that fearful cry of the human soul : “What is—what might have been !”

And as the verger went his own way so I went mine, envying the organist who had it all to himself, and could go on playing long after the gloom had gathered, if he so willed ; filling the darkness with magical sound, and living, if he was of that turn of mind, in a dream that was not of this world.

The next morning was dull and wet and cold ; but towards noon the rain ceased, and about two o'clock I started for Stonehenge,

in a conveyance supplied by the hotel. The wind was blowing a bitter blast, but as on the morrow I should leave Salisbury, there was no choice but to brave the gale or give up the expedition. A newly married couple had just started for the ruins under similar conditions—in the matter of conveyance only, be it understood—and though the fervent influence of each other's society might assist in keeping them warm, still I felt that what they had undertaken could not even, without that influence, come under the head of the Impossibilities.

It was a dull, dreary afternoon. The sun might have departed to other spheres for anything that could be seen or felt of him—frightened away by the cutting wind. The clouds were gray and leaden, as if they were about to come down in showers of snow and once more whiten the world. We rattled through the streets and soon found ourselves in the bare open country, approaching Old Sarum: a spot so associated with much that is interesting in the annals of England. It is now nothing but a large conical-shaped hill encircled with entrenchments. But here, in days long gone by, existed a cathedral and a castle and all the busy life of a world.

As the wind caught us, sweeping with long-gathered force over Salisbury Plain, we could realise and believe in the ancient saying that "When the wind did blow, the people could not hear the priest say mass." Perhaps this did not greatly affect their souls, since if they had heard they would probably not have understood; but it discomforted their bodies and that was no light matter. It has been handed down by tradition that the site of the new Salisbury Cathedral was determined by an arrow shot from a bow from Old Sarum—rather a long shot, even for the stalwart arms of those days: and again, that not the arrow determined the site, but a vision of the Virgin herself appearing to the Bishop; and to the Virgin the new cathedral was dedicated. But whatever determined the site, chance, or revelation, or mere human judgment—which latter was most probable—it was well chosen.

On all sides the country was almost bare of trees, and the wind, that so disturbed the people of Old Sarum at their devotions, swept with cruel force across the long open stretches. But having started, it had to be endured, and the horse went boldly on, leaving behind the remains of the ancient fortifications, that took one back to the days long past, when Salisbury Plain was in turn in the hands of Ancient Britons, Danes, Saxons: a stronghold of Roman encampments.

Very different days, those, from this luxurious age. Pampering and self-indulgence were unknown: hard, stern realities alone existed, Spartan courage, savage powers of endurance. For a bed, often the bare earth; for a pillow, a stone. Nothing known or recognised or valued but the love of power, the lust of conquest.

An age of barbarism. The refinement and luxury of Rome herself was not carried by her people into the countries they conquered

laid waste. Yet it was all productive of good in the end, no doubt ; fulfilling the world's plan, taking her on her course, carving out the destiny of nations : a fate which gives to each its time and place, its rise and fall, its day of power and wealth, its time of change and decay. Favoured England has had a long spell of this wealth and power, a universal sway. Will she have it for ever ? The lot is cast into the lap of each, but there comes a time when the lap, full to overflowing, begins to reject its blessings, and in time collapses.

It was a drive of eight or nine miles. The bare plain presented a strange contrast to the wealth of the New Forest, so lately visited, and certainly gained nothing by the comparison. But all things in their turn. It cannot be always May ; it should not be " *toujours perdrix* " ; we see the beauty of the lights by the depth of the shadows ; the dawn following the darkest night is the most welcomed.

Gradually making way in spite of the wind, which did its best to keep us back, and passing a curiously-shaped workhouse, we reached the ancient village of Amesbury, lying in a wooded depression. Here, branching to the left, we entered for the moment a more luxurious country. The Avon flowed between rich pastures and well-kept parks, and almost washed the base of the handsome cruciform church, with its background of whispering trees. The door stood invitingly open, and a woman upon her knees was beautifying the stone flags with the aid of sundry domestic appurtenances. But it seemed wiser first to visit Stonehenge, and take the minor events of the drive in returning.

Beyond the church we entered a long avenue of over-arching foliage, rich with autumn tints. In summer time it must be a very lovely spot. Passing out of the shadow of the trees, we once more came to the open plain, and soon the great monuments composing Stonehenge might be seen on a slight eminence. On a bank to our left a pheasant was sitting, and boldly kept his ground as we almost brushed by him. Sweeping round on to the turf, we were quickly under the very shadow of the stones. Our newly-married pair were preparing to depart. *He* was tenderly wrapping round her a thick shawl of many colours ; *she* was gazing into his eyes with fond adoration. Without being very close to them, all this was quite visible. There are some things that have a way of obtruding themselves, whether you will or not. Then they packed and settled into their little Victoria, and away they went, evidently in Eden ; evidently pitying all those unhappy mortals who were shut without the gates in the cold, but leaving me to enjoy in undisturbed silence this great solitude ; this wonderful and mysterious record of a long past age, in the midst of the wide-spreading, intensely solitary plain.

Many things belonging to the past are enveloped in doubt and uncertainty, but none more so, apparently, than Stonehenge. The first mention of it on record is by Ninnius, in the year 617, but he throws no light upon the matter. It has been the subject of much con-

troversy, has occupied the attention of many minds, has been the object of much research, but nothing is positively known as to the origin, end and aim of these remarkable ruins. This very uncertainty goes far to prove their most remote antiquity. Fancy inclines to refer

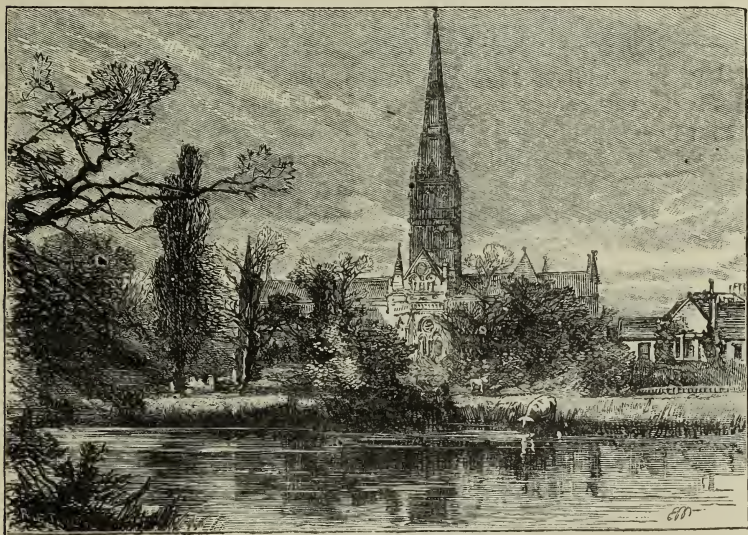


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them to Druidical remains, as throwing over them a greater glamour of mystery and romance : but whether they are so or not is as doubtful as everything else about them. Whether they were a temple erected to some heathen deity, or whether they were mere sepulchral monuments, are questions buried in the past. No Runic inscriptions have been handed down to be interpreted by the wise. Some great object

they must have served, and from the labour and stupendous exertions it evidently cost to erect them, it seems probable that the object was religious. The one certain thing about Stonehenge is that it once existed, and that it remains to this day a grand ruin.

Dr. Smith, writing in 1771, considered that it was most likely a Tropical Temple erected by the Druids for observing the motions of the heavenly bodies, and in an elaborate exposition he brings forward much cunning argument to prove his case. It is well known that the Druids were skilled astronomers, and, as Cæsar states, calculated eclipses with great accuracy. And there are signs about Stonehenge—such as the rising of the sun on Midsummer Day immediately over



SALISBURY, FROM THE RIVER.

a certain stone in a particular position—which, at least, do not contradict Dr. Smith's theory.

Three of the stones fell in January, 1797. Some men ploughing a field about half a mile away, suddenly felt the earth tremble, and on looking round saw that three of the stones—a trilith (two upright stones and one placed horizontally upon them)—had fallen to the earth.

Many great men have visited Stonehenge in the past, and left some record of their impressions. Pepys in his Diary mentions his stay at Salisbury, "where he slept in a silk bed at the King's Arms," and, I think, goes on to speak of Stonehenge. And we find Dr. Johnson—"the great lexicographer," to quote once more the austere Miss Pinkerton—thus writing to Mrs. Thrale in 1783 :

"Two nights ago Mr. Burke sat with me a long time ; he seems much pleased with his journey. We had both seen Stonehenge this summer for the first time. I told him the view had enabled me to confute two opinions which had been advanced about it. One that the materials are not natural stones, but are artificial composition hardened by time ; and has this strong argument to support it—that stone of that species is nowhere to be found. The other opinion, advanced by Dr. Charlton, is, that it was erected by the Danes. Mr. Bowles made me observe that the transverse stones were fixed on the perpendicular supporters by a knob formed on the top of the upright stone, which entered into a hollow cut in the crossing stone. This is a proof that the enormous edifice was raised by a people who had not yet the knowledge of mortar, which cannot be supposed of the Danes, who came hither in ships, and were not ignorant certainly of the arts of life. This proves, likewise, the stones not to be factitious ; for they that could mould such durable masses could do infinitely more than make mortar. You have doubtless seen Stonehenge, and if you have not, I should think it a hard task to make an adequate description. It is, in my opinion, to be referred to the earliest habitation of the island, as a Druidical monument of at least two thousand years ; probably the most ancient work of man upon the island."

Amongst the different agencies said to have been brought to bear in the erection of Stonehenge, magic of course has its place. Geoffery of Monmouth, writing in 1130, says that the stones were brought in one night from the Plains of Kildare by the Evil One. The stones belonged to an old woman, and by their agency she was able to cure diseases, and perform other wonders. The enchanter Merlin coveted these stones, and entered into a compact with the devil to get them for him. The latter accordingly disguised himself as a gentleman, and knocked at the old woman's door. She opened it—perhaps expecting a patient—and seeing a well-dressed gentleman before her, invited him in. It is not said whether he brought with him a strong smell of sulphur, but it is recorded that he carried a large bag of money in his hand.

Next he offered to purchase the stones ; the price to be as much money as ever the old woman could count during the time the stones were being transported to England.

This offer was too tempting to be refused, and the bargain was struck. Thereupon the devil opened his sack, and poured upon the table an immense heap of coin, all, however, in threepenny and fourpenny pieces. The old woman began to count, but had no sooner placed her finger on a fourpenny piece than the devil cried: "Hold ! the stones are gone !"

The woman hastily rose and peered out, and sure enough they were no longer there ; and upon looking round in alarm she found that the visitor was gone too, money and all. Whether she died from,

the shock, or went raving mad, or what became of her, or how she managed to gain a living now that Othello's occupation was gone, the chronicler is not good enough to say. It did not enter into his plans to satisfy a vulgar curiosity. Perhaps she had some savings hoarded up, and as there were no Three per Cents. in those days, it is possible that she ended her life in a dissipated kind of way by living upon her capital. We will hope, at least, that it was the only time she ever had dealings with the powers of darkness.

One of the stones outside the centre cluster of Stonehenge is called the Friar's Heel. The devil, having finished his work, stood in the midst of the great pile, and vowed that no man should ever know how Stonehenge had got there. He did not notice an old friar who, just behind him, exclaimed: "That is more than thee or anyone else can say." Upon which the devil, in great anger, seized one of the huge stones, and the friar, in great alarm, fled—so rapidly that the stone only just caught his heel, and he escaped to tell the tale.

It was a fitting day on which to see the remains of Stonehenge. The lowering sky was in harmony with these frowning, gigantic masses, hoary with the lapse of centuries. An undefined sense of the mysterious took possession of one in gazing at these huge, many-sized monuments, scattered about apparently regardless of design. It was almost as if some unseen and familiar spirit of the place hovered about it, and enveloped you with its influence. Little order could now be traced in the position of the stones. Some had fallen and become embedded in the earth; others are resting one upon another; others, again, are much out of the perpendicular, and seem ready to yield, but their time has not yet come.

Suddenly, as I looked, an old watchman, grim and gaunt, who might have been the genius of the place, now embodied in human form, appeared from behind one of the huge stones, where he was sheltering from the wind. This apparition, discerning a victim, advanced and began his popular explanation. He had been there regularly, I think he said, for nearly half a century; pointed out the plan of the stones, the position of those that remained in relation to those that were gone, and reduced them to something like a system. But a slight study of the original plan of Stonehenge before visiting it renders one independent of any further information.

The old man was as venerable as the stones, and as rough: a masculine counterpart, it might well be imagined, of the old Irishwoman who had been cheated out of them by the devil. It was impossible not to pity the old keeper, this bitter day, though he was here of his own accord, for his own profit. Take refuge behind what stone he would, the wind was sure to find him out. But use is second nature, happily, or the inevitable would sometimes be borne less easily than it is.

So the old man seemed not to mind the wind and the cold. He lighted up a short pipe—that surely had been his companion for the

half century—and began smoking philosophically. "Pain is forgotten where gain follows," and the small gratuities that probably tell to his lot from every visitor to the remains, more than atoned for the discomforts of an exposed and monotonous existence.

There was undoubtedly something very impressive about Stonehenge; but whether I was not "en rapport" with the surroundings, or whether the bitter east wind, cutting with the sharpness of a two-edged sword, put to flight all romantic emotions, certain it was that I felt somewhat disappointed. The cluster of stones was gigantic, strange, weird; "a sense of mystery the spirit daunted;" but in itself it failed to raise those grand flights that others seem to have gained from them. It was only in looking at them as records of antiquity, witnesses it may be of a past barbarism, but certainly of a power we appear to have lost, that they became invested with strange, unusual interest; and thus viewed, produced their influence upon the spirit.

But the east wind ceased not, and every moment became a greater torture. Ere the shadows lengthened and disappeared it would be wise to depart. Accordingly we turned from Stonehenge not altogether with reluctance. Gradually receding from the strange cluster, more mysterious than ever they seemed in the waning light, their weird influence even more felt than when standing within the charmed circle. The silence of the dead ages enfolded them almost with portentous omen to the wayfarer, shrouded as they were in the gloomy sense of twilight now creeping over the vast plain. Perhaps the best and happiest time for seeing them would be on a bright night, with a full moon pouring down her flood of light, the huge stones, standing out in grim solemnity, casting long, ghostly shadows upon the dark earth.

As the little carriage went quickly down the hill, leaving the outlines of the strange group still clearly mapped against the sky, it was no hard task to bring vividly before one scenes that had taken place hundreds, nay, thousands of years ago. The despotic, crafty, and superstitious Druids, so wise in their generation even at that early period of the world's history, at their solemn and mysterious rites; though what those rites actually were, and what their manner of worship, no records of the past disclose to us. It was easy to invest this solitary plain with a crowd of rude barbarians at worship, bending to the will of their priests: only here and there an unseen protest going on in some nobler breast struggling for the true Light that an inward witness whispered to him was not here, or to be thus found. We swept down the hill and left it all behind us, a rude monument whose glory had departed; in comparison with the vast plain, growing small and diminutive the farther we went from it.

The pheasant was still sitting on the bank, and defied us as boldly as ever. Passing through the long avenue of trees, we swept round the road, crossed the stream, and stopped at the church. Here the carriage left me and went on to the George Inn, on the same side of

the road, but farther on, to give the horse a rest and a meal. The merciful man is merciful to his beast.

But the church door was now locked and safe: the woman with all her paraphernalia had departed. "He who will not when he may, when he will he shall have nay." On making the tour of the building, however, I came upon its weak point—the woman had left the key in the vestry door. Turning it, I entered. The first thing to stare me in the face was the Table of Kindred Affinity, hanging on the wall, the restriction *A MAN MAY NOT MARRY HIS GRANDMOTHER* always emphasized by ridiculously large type; as if there might be danger of transgression unless the warning was thus impressed upon him. There is one connection that I believe has not been added to the list: a



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man may NOT marry his MOTHER-IN-LAW. Perhaps they thought it really not necessary to go quite so far as this.

The church of Amesbury is a handsome edifice, cruciform in shape, with large windows, of the Early English period. The interior was plain and unadorned, but almost imposing from its simplicity. It appeared to have been recently fitted up with comfortable pews, and the many oil lamps fixed into their backs in an original manner, which did duty for gas, must, when lighted, have had a very picturesque effect upon the interior.

Out by the way I entered, and on to the inn; an old-fashioned building, where a civil waiting-maid showed me to a room already in possession of a solitary wayfarer: a pedestrian who had been driven to seek these comfortable quarters in the hope that the morrow would see a change for the better. Whilst I drank of the fragrant cup that cheers but not inebriates we compared mental notes, and agreed that,

like many another place, the reputation of Stonehenge had preceded it, and must often result, at a first glance, in a sense of disappointment.

But in the days of its glory it must have been an imposing and solemn edifice, full of barbarous rude grandeur. The refining and elevating influences of Christianity have brought out in man all that is beautiful, high, and noble. No two buildings, almost within sight of each other, could display a greater contrast than Stonehenge and Salisbury: the one of rude, primeval ages, when men were powerful but heathen; the other the most exquisite type of a pure and perfect architecture, fitting symbol of the religion in whose honour it stands. We can imagine the one raised to a supposed deity that demanded the sacrifice of all its votaries—a very Juggernaut of insatiable fury—that “Lord of the world” whose priests at Puri amount to four thousand and whose deluded followers in India are unnumbered: the other an offering to the Creator, whose attributes are summed up in the words Love and Mercy.

The shades of night were falling when we once more quitted the inn; but the darkness only shut out the bare plain; little was lost. Gradually approaching Old Sarum, the lights of the new town (new by comparison) gleamed out in cheerful contrast with the surrounding darkness. Then we entered the streets and clattered through them on to the White Hart, thankful to get within shelter of its walls.

The next morning, to wind was added a perfect downpour of rain. I wondered how the pedestrian would fare at Amesbury; whether he would brave the elements, and regret not having made the best of yesterday; or whether he would be content to spend a quiet Saturday and still quieter Sunday in the old place. For Sunday ought to be very pleasant in Amesbury, surrounded as it is by a halo of antiquity and past traditions. Here, in 980, a Benedictine convent was founded by Queen Elfrida; and here tradition says Guinevere found refuge from the world. In 1177 Henry II. expelled all the nuns for their wicked living. After this it rose to greater splendour than ever, receiving more royal ladies within the shelter of its walls. Finally, it came to an end in the days of Cromwell, and passed into the hands of the then Earl of Hertford.

But no place could be less inviting than Salisbury in such weather. The influence of its dull houses and long, regular streets was more depressing than the depths of a forest or the loneliness of a desert. Before midday I had said farewell to the old town, and, with weeping skies and half a gale, was on the way to Bournemouth.

STEPHANIE.

By F. E. M. NOTLEY, AUTHOR OF "OLIVE VARCOE."

IN that wildest portion of the Ardennes where the woods grow more stately and the giant ash and elm and pine stretch on and on to the Black Forest, there lies, in the very heart of the green, a village which I will name St. Elmo. It is wonderfully beautiful; except Bouillon, the birth-place of the renowned Godfrey, there is not a hamlet in the forest that can vie with its picturesque rocks and its wild scenery.

Many years ago I went to St. Elmo for a week's fishing in the brawling, troubled stream which, pouring over rock and rapid, comes leaping from the forest, and dashes by the village on its way to the Meuse. My road lay through glens and woods filled with beauty. All around my path sang the oriole and the nightingale. In these solitudes this bird waits not the darkness to send forth his glorious song, and there seems to be a fulness in his melody rarely heard in England. At night, when he loves best to sing, there gushes forth from the woods a stream of music that fills the air.

The golden oriole, or golden thrush, is a bird of brilliant plumage; his back, breast, and head are of deep gold; his wings, eyes, and tail a shining black, yet exquisitely marked and tipped with gold, and glossed like satin on either side. He sings all day a low but sweet tune, which sounds like "Lorio! lorio!" hence the people familiarly call him Lorient. His mate and he build a hanging nest, so curiously tied and sewn about with leaves that, swinging as it does with every wind among the foliage, the most cunning eye can scarcely find it.

As the day grew hot, I plunged deeper and deeper among the soft shades of green, till, about mid-day, when every breath was still with heat, I reached a magnificent forest glade six miles long, straight as the arrow flies, and arched above by interlacing branches and a roof of leaves. Beautiful exceedingly was the arched roof, and so refreshing in the heat to every jaded sense, that the eye bathed in its green sea, and the ear drank in its stillness, and the hand longed to touch its dewy verdure.

"Surely the very place," said I, "for an Arcadian feast."

So I sprang from my horse, and fastened him to a tree. Then I took the basket hung at the saddle, and unfolded its contents, and spread them on the sward. A goodly repast for an anchorite was mine, and I enjoyed it like a hermit—a wondrous sense of solitude, of praise, of life filling all my being.

"Here is thine own health, wayfarer," I said aloud, as I took the tankard in my hand.

"I will *trinquer* with thee, stranger," cried an unexpected voice. Startled, I looked around, and up and down the green glade, but through the whole length of the lonely avenue, the sea of leaf and grass remained unspotted by aught but flitting birds or tremulous shadows.

"Cuckoo-oo là là ! Cuckoo-oo là là !" sang the voice again. This is the refrain of an Ardennais song, sung by the peasants in the old Walloon tongue, the tune having a freshness and joyousness about it, redolent of forest life and freedom. The merry voice echoed above me, among the leaves, and looking up, I saw, hanging on a great bough of beech, midway between me and the green roof, a wild figure with long hair, sunburnt face, and great dark eyes, somewhat restless, though full of glee. Seeing that I perceived him, he swung himself to the ground from the swaying branch, and would have fled away, but that, starting up, I seized him by the arm. He was a youngster of about fourteen, wild, shy, and free as a bird.

"Let me go," he cried. "We are playing *Cache-cache* : if you don't let me run, Stéphanie will find me."

A little blooming face peeped out from among the leaves as he spoke, but disappeared like a frightened bird on seeing a stranger.

"Now fetch me Stéphanie," I said. "And you and she shall have these cakes, and all this fruit you see here piled upon the grass."

Off he darted like an arrow as I let him go, and I doubted whether the hope of cakes would be strong enough to conquer his savage shyness, and bring him back. But he came, or rather the girl came leading him. She was smaller than he, but she had an older, calmer look. She kept her red lips closed firmly, while she gazed at me with eyes full of wonder—the sort of wonder with which we might look at some strange animal, newly caught. Her gaze nearly disconcerted me, it was so wondrous steady and self-possessed, so singular in its perfect innocence and calmness. As I looked into her eyes, I saw in them an expression never found in any girlish face, in places within the pale of civilization—an expression so unwitting of evil, so devoid of that species of conscious bashfulness which brings the reddening cheek, and the averted glance, that it came nearer to my thought of angels than anything I had ever yet seen on earth.

Then, too, she was beautiful, and her beauty was of a most rare order. Her complexion was of that clear olive that at night shines with the lustre of ivory ; her cheek being perfectly colourless, yet bright with health ; and her coral lips, her black arched brows, and long lashes gave to her face all the brilliancy of contrast. Her eyes were of that rare green-grey so seldom found in northern climes, yet justly praised in Spain and Italy—eyes that win the heart at once, so extraordinary is their depth, their darkness, and power. Her small figure was the perfection of grace, and her hands and feet were tiny. Her hair was of a peculiar brown, like the brown of a bird's wing, and utterly unbrightened by any lighter tints.

This is her description, but words fail to do justice to the power and wonder of her beauty. It is the magic and charm of loveliness, not the form alone, that constitute its true dominion.

In blundering words I asked the child her name.

"Stéphanie the Stranger," she answered.

"I, too, am a foreigner, Stéphanie."

She gazed at me more earnestly here.

"Are you from my mother's country?" she said. "Are you from England?"

"Yes, I am from England."

"Then you may kiss me, if you will." And she presented first one cheek, then the other, in the French fashion, while I stooped and touched them with my lips. Perhaps she saw on the boy's face some slight anger at this caress, for she stole her hand into his, and drew him away.

"Come, Gustave, let us play *cache-cache* again."

"Take the fruit with you, my children," I cried.

The boy looked back, but did not move till Stéphanie came towards me; then he waved her back, and caught up the little basket himself.

"Are you, too, a stranger, Gustave?" I asked.

"No: I am an Ardennais."

"Then you are not Stéphanie's brother?" I said, a little surprised.

"Not her brother! You are mistaken, I have no sister but Stéphanie."

He ran off, and I watched them both wander away down the long, arched avenue, till their pretty figures disappeared beneath a canopy of leaves.

As I rode, an hour later, into the little street of St. Elmo, my friend, the doctor, seized the bridle of my horse.

"I expected you long ago," he cried; "but, thank heaven, you are in time."

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

"The Englishwoman is dying—our village mystery—our ten years' wonder."

"My dear friend," I interposed, "you forget that this is my first visit to St. Elmo, and I know nothing of your village mysteries."

Indeed, hitherto the Doctor and I had only met at Brussels, and it was there he had given me an invitation to his cottage in the Ardennes.

"Come with me," he answered, placing his arm within mine. "I will tell you the mystery on our way."

He drew me on at a rapid pace, talking as he went.

"Twelve years ago," he said, "a lady, dressed in black, descended from the diligence on the grand' route, and asked her way to St. Elmo. She directed her luggage to be left at the Barrière, and walking herself by the shorter way through the woods, she reached our

solitary village on foot. She had a child in her arms—a little girl about a year old ——”

“Stéphanie!” I cried.

“Yes; that is her name. The lady found lodgings at the house of a small farmer, and there she has resided ever since. And during this time she has never had a visitor; and, with the exception of two packets a year from Paris, evidently from some notary or man of business, she has never had a letter. She has lived here like one buried alive.”

“And who is she?” I asked.

“No one knows. She calls herself Madame Grey. Her means appear to be very small, yet sufficient in a place like this for necessities. But lately she has needed a few luxuries, which I have done my best to supply her with. She has struggled against consumption these two years; to-day she is dying. I am taking you to her.”

“Me!” I exclaimed. “Why give her the pain of seeing a stranger?”

“She has asked for you—I mean, she has asked if there was not an Englishman near, to whom she could speak. And remembering you were coming, I mentioned your name. Then she begged me to bring you to her the moment you arrived. She is sinking fast, so use no useless ceremonies in your conversation, for she has no time to waste in these.”

“Have you any idea for what reason she wishes to see a countryman of her own?”

“I can only guess. She may have some communication to make, some request to prefer—perhaps respecting the child.”

“Is she a widow?” I asked.

“I cannot tell you,” returned the Doctor, with a terrific shrug of the shoulder. “I only know that for twelve years she has led here the life of a saint, and except for the companionship of her child, she has been utterly alone. She has employed herself in working for the poor, and in educating her little daughter; giving her as a fellow-pupil, Gustave, the farmer’s son. Like Paul and Virginia, these two children have been inseparable. The people here, always seeing them together, almost forget they are not brother and sister.”

We had reached now a wild and lonely glen, walled in with broken and fantastic cliffs, over which hung woods of dwarf beech, ash and hazel. Beneath one of the tallest of these cliffs stood a thatched cottage, with a small garden spread around it, and just beyond this, the river, which ran through the valley, narrowed itself between two rocks, and then sprang over a fall of about twenty feet. The rush and roar of the waterfall added inexpressibly to the wildness and loneliness of the scene.

“This is the cottage,” said the Doctor.

We entered, and in another moment I found myself in the presence of Madame Grey.

The dying woman looked at me eagerly, with large wild eyes ; then she held out her hand to me, saying feebly in English :

“I want to speak to you alone.”

The Doctor and the farmer's wife, whom we had found sitting by her bedside, intuitively understood her wish, and left us, before I could speak it.

“I am grieved to trouble a stranger,” said Mrs. Grey. “I trust you will forgive me, sir.”

Mindful of the Doctor's counsel not to waste time in ceremony, I came to the point at once.

“Make no apologies, Mrs. Grey, but tell me, I beg, what I can do for you ; and believe that, stranger as I am, I would do much to be of assistance to a countrywoman.”

“It is but a little thing, sir, to do, and if you will give me your promise to perform it, I shall die content.” I gave her my promise, and she then drew from beneath her pillow a small pocket-book, from which she took a card, which she placed in my hand.

“When I am dead, will you write to that address, and tell *him* to send or come for his child?”

My eyes fell on the name and address of an Austrian noble, reputed to be of immense wealth, and known to be one of the proudest of the exclusive aristocracy of Vienna. I glanced at the dying woman with deep compassion. On her attenuated face there lingered the remains of great beauty. And on this wasted page I fancied I could read her history.

“And if the Count will not acknowledge his daughter—if he will neither come nor send for her—what are your wishes then?” I said.

A faint flush suffused her thin cheek as she answered me painfully.

“It was of me—his wife—that he was ashamed ; even his pride will not hinder him from acknowledging his daughter.”

“Good Heavens ! are you the Countess Von H———?” I exclaimed. “And dying here, like this !”

I scarcely knew whether to believe her words or not. It seemed impossible that a man, like the Count, would let his wife perish slowly in such obscurity and want. But the dying woman did not heed the doubt implied in my exclamation.

“We have both much to forgive,” she said, faintly. “Tell him I implored his pardon. My pride was even greater than his—may God forgive me !”

She fell back on her pillow, fainting, but rallied again as she heard below the merry voices of the children who, hand-in-hand, came in together, singing.

“I have hidden from the poor child the fact that I am dying,” she said to me, sorrowfully ; “and who will comfort her when I am gone?”

“You have done wrong to conceal the truth from Stéphanie,” I answered ; “tell her now. I will send her to you at once.”

With a kind farewell I withdrew, and on descending, I found indeed that not only the children, but the farmer and his wife, were in ignorance of the dying state of the English lady. She had always spoken to them cheerfully, and the insidious disease from which she suffered had helped to deceive them. As I disclosed to them the truth, they burst into passionate weeping, except Stéphanie, who, with a look of disbelief on her white face, crept softly upstairs to her mother's room.

Mrs. Grey never saw the sun rise again; but before she breathed her last, I had the happiness of putting into her hand a loving message from her husband.

"I come Mary, instantly—live for me, and for our child!"

I had accomplished this by a ride of about thirty miles to the nearest telegraph station, whence I had dispatched a message to him, and awaited an answer.

My heart ached with fear as I galloped back to St. Elmo, lest I should arrive with these comforting words too late. But I reached the village just before the break of day, and, accompanied by the doctor, I hurried to the cottage. My eyes were blinded as I put the paper in Mrs. Grey's hand, but she was past reading it. It was the little Stéphanie who opened and read the message, amid sobs and tears. Then she flung herself down by the bedside.

"I can never love but you, mother," she said, wildly.

"Stéphanie, you will love your father, for my sake. But, where—where is Gustave?" said Mrs. Grey, stretching out her hand, blindly.

Choked with sobs, the boy knelt down by Stéphanie's side, and the thin white hands of the dying woman were placed on the heads of both.

"Never forget each other, children, while you live. Stéphanie, do not forsake Gustave. Do not let pride ——"

But the lingering tide of life ebbed fast, and the lips were still. One other murmur broke from them: "Stephen! my love! my love!" Then her head fell back, and we led the children away.

II.

IN two days from this time, the Count Von H—— stood by the coffin of his wife, and looked down upon her dead face. What his thoughts were I know not, but on his haggard cheek and trembling lip I read remorse and shame.

Stéphanie stood by him, proud and silent. The child's naturally pale face had, through grief, grown snowy white, and her beauty now had the strangely solemn look of death. Her large dark eyes were fixed on her father, in a gaze which told of resentment, wonder, and fear. Suddenly he turned and clasped her in his arms, with a burst

of passionate grief which a man may feel once in his life, or, perhaps, twice, but not oftener.

I had no right to look on this ; I closed the door softly and stole away.

Later in the day, a hearse and a grand coffin, velvet-coloured, arrived from a distant town, and the poor lady who had lived so humbly, was borne away in pride to be laid in death among those who had scorned her living.

It was after the departure of the sad *cortège* that the Count came to me, and requested the favour of a few moments' conversation.

"I come, sir," he said, "to clear my dead wife's name of any shadow that may linger about it in your mind. It was for no sin of hers that we parted and she lived here in pain and poverty for twelve years."

His lip shook, and his hand, which he extended towards me, trembled.

"Allow me to thank you for your kindness. I depart this evening with my daughter. I go to Vienna to present her to my family, after which I shall place her in a convent to complete her education. Sir, it is natural I should wish her to forget this sad time. If you ever meet her again, I shall trust to your honour not to recognise in the Countess Von H—— the little Stéphanie Grey, who has lived so long among these poor villagers."

"I do not belong to the great world, Count. It is not likely we shall ever meet again ; but if we do, I will willingly obey your wish. And further, in very pity, I would not remind the Countess of her free and happy years in the Ardennes."

With this the Count and I parted.

In the evening he and little Stéphanie quitted St. Elmo, and I wondered what the proud man thought as, all through the length of the long avenue, the boy, Gustave, followed the carriage, sometimes flinging himself on the sward to sob passionately, then rising with the old cry :

"Stéphanie ! sister Stéphanie ! say good-bye to me once more. Promise me again that you will come back !"

Then Stéphanie waved her hand from the window, and her childish voice answered :

"Be sure I will come back, Gustave, and we will play here again at *Cache-cache*. Do not weep any more, brother. Wait for me next summer, here in this road. I will come, Gustave ; I will surely come."

"Poor children !" I said to myself, "they will never play together again beneath this bright canopy of leaves."

Going that night to the farmer's, I found him and his wife both enchanted with the Count's generosity.

"And what will he do for Gustave ?" I asked.

"Gustave is to be a priest; he is to go to the Seminary, and the Count pays all expenses."

I had my thoughts respecting this, but I held my peace.

My Ardennes life, with its simple reminiscences, was put away from me, and almost forgotten, when, one night at a brilliant ball in Paris, I saw the face of Stéphanie Grey. Five years had passed since I last saw her, but I could not mistake so rare a face as hers.

"Will you tell me who is that young lady?" I said to the friend with me.

"She is the young Countess Von H——, one of the richest heiresses now in Paris."

"Her face is strangely beautiful! What is her history?"

"'A blank, my lord,'" said the lady, quoting Shakespeare. "Literally a blank for the first twelve years of her life; but we take her father's word for it, that she was then abroad with her mother. That is her father, standing by her, looking on her so proudly."

"And the mother?"

"Oh! she is dead. Hers was a sad story. I will tell it to you some day. The Count little guesses that I know it, but I was a schoolfellow of Mary Grey's, and she trusted me with her secret."

I would have asked her eagerly for the story, but at this moment the orchestra commenced a wild and joyous air, resembling so much in its cadences the old Ardennais song which the children had carolled in the forest, that I remained silent and startled. Breathing faintly through the strain—now lost, now returning—came this echo of the free woods, and I saw Stéphanie Grey turn towards the musicians a wild look, painful in its intenseness. Then her face grew deadly white, and leaning heavily on the arm of her father, she murmured a word in his ear.

Evidently it was a request to retire, for, in another instant, both passed us on their way to the hall. I started up and followed them. A string of carriages was at the door, and around them pressed a great throng of people, straining eager eyes to catch a glimpse of the wealth and beauty that flitted by.

In a loud voice, the Count's carriage was called for by an attendant, and as it reached the door there was a struggle in the crowd, and a young man pushed to the front. A gaunt, haggard figure, clad in rags; misery in his aspect, famine in his looks, but on his face an expression of such intense, eager longing that all eyes followed his in wonder. And their gaze fell on a young shrinking girl, in "the shimmer of satin and the sheen of pearls," whose paleness shone out like death, and whose dark eyes passed wearily over the wild face bent towards her.

"She does not know me!" he shrieked aloud. Then I saw his arms flung upwards, and he fell down among the crowd. The Count lifted his daughter into the carriage, and it drove away at a rapid pace.

"The young lady has fainted!" said a voice. "This madman frightened her, too, at the last ball to which she went."

That despairing cry had been shrieked out in the old Walloon tongue, and I knew the wretched wanderer, whose haggard face had bent so near the Countess Stéphanie, was her foster brother, the poor forgotten Gustave.

I rushed in among the crowd, hoping to find him, but on every side I met a wall of strange faces, of whom I soon found it was vain to ask questions. None knew, or none cared to say, by which road that gaunt figure departed.

"You ask me the story of Mary Grey," said my friend. "It is soon told. She was the daughter of a ruined merchant—a weak man, as unfit for the business of life as he was for the business and the wealth his father bequeathed him. After the total loss of his fortune, he lived here, in a small apartment. And here it was that his daughter had the misfortune to meet with the Count Von H——. You know the Austrian nobility is the most exclusive in Europe. Only those acquainted with society at Vienna can understand the *wall* a parvenu finds extended against him. Having heard somewhat of this, Mr. Grey justly thought his daughter could be no match for the Count, and he forbade him his house. It was too late. Mary and her lover fled to England and were married. Whether marriage in England, with every Austrian formality unfulfilled, constituted marriage in Austria, I know not. I only know that Mary wrote to me from Naples, telling me that although her marriage was still a secret from her husband's friends, she would be happy if only her father would write to her and forgive her. It seemed all her letters remained unanswered.

"A year passed away, and then I heard from Mary again. She wrote in fearful anguish. Her husband had gone to Vienna to attend the death-bed of his mother, and in his absence she had opened a letter from his sister. This, like some rude shock, awoke Mary from her dream.

"‘I cannot wonder,’ said the writer, ‘that you hesitate to acknowledge your mad marriage. If you do so, you are ruined. No one will speak to the daughter of a bankrupt and a suicide. You must lead this woman about in utter loneliness, feeling ashamed of her, and of the folly that has shut you out from the society of your equals. If her father had not made away with himself, one might bear it; as it is, the whole thing is a horror. When our poor mother is gone, from whom I have scrupulously kept the secret, I counsel you to make up your mind to part with this poor drag on your existence. Ascertain if your marriage is valid or no in Austria, and act accordingly. If you have not firmness to do this, I warn you that your career in your own country—a noble one, if you would—is over, and you are henceforth a wanderer and an outcast.’

"When Mary Grey laid down this letter her heart was broken—the news it told her was so bitter. Her father, then, had died by his own hand, and she, scarcely a wife, was a drag and a curse to the man she loved. In her way she was as proud, nay prouder, than he was, and she resolved now to leave him for ever. Even if she were his legal wife, it was horrible to feel that he, whom she loved so dearly, was ashamed of her, and felt her 'a curse and drag.' She hastened to Paris; there she learnt that her father—ever a weak man—had destroyed himself in a fit of frenzied grief the day after her desertion of him. This fact her husband had pitifully kept from her, but Mary knew that he had brooded over it in disgust and horror, and it added terribly to his burden of shame in his marriage. If she had resolved before to quit him, this dire truth confirmed her resolve. Henceforth her loneliness should be a penance self-imposed. She wrote me this from Paris, adding that her love for her husband was too great to let her ruin him. He was now free: she restored him to his home, his country, his friends, his career. She would not claim anything at his hands; she had enough for bread, and she would live and die unknown. 'If she had had a son,' she said, 'she should scarce feel justified in doing this, but her child was a daughter, and it would be happier for her to be brought up in obscurity, and love and marry some poor man.'

"I never heard from Mary Grey again—I never knew till you told me, how she lived, or how she died."

"And how did the Count bear the loss of his wife and child?" I asked.

"Very differently, I believe, from the expectations of his sister. He did not return to Vienna, he sought out no honourable career. A lost and lonely man, he wandered about Europe purposely, till five years ago he electrified the fashionable world by burying his wife with all sorts of ghastly honours, in the family vault in some old château in the Tyrol. At the same time he introduced and acknowledged his daughter, who is very beautiful, very accomplished, and very unhappy."

"How do you know that?" I said, eagerly.

"Her face tells it. I hear she hates the world, refuses all offers of marriage, and only implores leave to enter a convent. Her father, who adores her, is in despair. She is very restless, and he wanders about with her from city to city. But people say it is all useless, the same strange event follows them everywhere—but then, of course, that is impossible."

"What event?" I cried. And I felt my heart beat painfully as I bent forward to listen.

"Why, people say the poor young Countess is haunted by a madman—a wild, gaunt creature, who follows her with a most piteous and heart-breaking love. Who he is, none know. The Count has offered a reward many times to find him, but in vain."

I held my peace. I did not say this poor lost creature was Stéphanie's foster brother, once the happy child of the Ardennes.

With much pity in my heart, I sought him anxiously many days in Paris, but when I heard the Count and his daughter were gone, I ceased my search, feeling by a sure instinct that this city no longer held Gustave le Fou.

There is no need to relate what business, or what pleasure, took me two years after this to St. Elmo. I went by the same road, and it was with strangely sad feelings that I now looked up to the great roof of green leaves, and thought of the two joyous children whose happy voices had startled my solitude. In deep silence I rode on over the sun-flecked turf; leaf and shadow twinkling around me, flashing oriole and resplendent butterfly darting and playing among the branches, and all bearing to me less of sunshine and of joy than of old. And almost at the same spot where I had stopped to lunch, beneath the same huge beech where the boy had swung himself from the branches, there stood a wild figure, with long hair and dark eyes, sad and restless.

He looked at me mournfully as I approached him.

"Do not tell them at home that you have seen me," he said. "I am waiting for Stéphanie. She promised to come again in the summer, and play *Cache-cache* in the woods."

"She cannot play now, Gustave," I answered. "Come home with me to St. Elmo. I will let you ride if you will come."

He looked wistfully a moment, and then turned away.

"No, I will not go to St. Elmo, death is there—I have seen it. I will wait in the woods. She will not break her promise, and she must find me here where we played so often."

"Who is dead at St. Elmo?" I asked, thinking to turn his thoughts to another theme.

His answer startled me.

"Stéphanie is dead. She died in the spring, when the flowers came."

"Then if Stéphanie is dead, Gustave, why wait for her here?"

"The lady is dead—Stéphanie, the lady, who came back to St. Elmo with a pale, pale face, and wept with her head on my breast—she is dead. But the other Stéphanie who loved me, who played with me in the woods, she is not dead. I saw her go away with her father, and she said, 'Gustave, I will come back—wait for me.' She will keep her word—she will return to me. You may ride off, stranger. I am waiting, you see, in the wood—I am waiting till Stéphanie comes. Lorio! lorio! Ah! the loriots and I are great friends. She loves the loriots. But the cuckoo is gone."

Here he burst out into the old song, "Cuckoo-oo là là—cuckoo-oo là là," and went wandering away down the long avenue, till my eyes lost him among leaves and shadows."

At St. Elmo the Doctor told me his sad story.

"Poor Gustave went to the priests' seminary," he said, "but he had no vocation for the Church. Why the Count wished him to be a priest, I can only guess. In three years, having refused to enter the priesthood, he returned to St. Elmo, much improved in culture and appearance, but strangely unsettled in mind. The love he had ever borne to the child Stéphanie, had, with his increasing years, taken another phase, and become a hopeless passion. His sole thought was to see her again. Patiently he waited another year, trusting to hear news of her, but none came; then there grew upon him a feverish restlessness, and he left the village abruptly. By what strange magnetism he knew that Stéphanie loved him, and pined amid all the wealth and splendour around her for his companionship and the free woods again, I cannot tell you; yet it was certain that it was so, and his heart knew it. But though he wandered from city to city in quest of her, they did not meet. He was so ignorant of the world, so poor, so lonely, that it was no marvel his search was unsuccessful. He did not even know Stéphanie's real name. You will remember the Count made it known here only to you and myself. But at length they met, he a poor wanderer in the streets, she the dainty queen of some royal fête, stepping into her carriage. He recognised her instantly, and sprang forward, crying, 'Stéphanie! Stéphanie!' the gendarmes thrust him back, and he fell among the crowd, beaten down like some poor weed.

"The girl heard his voice, and clinging with passionate tears to her father, she implored him to seek out her brother—her dear brother! She called him that name still. The Count soothed her, and gave her many promises, then placed her within the palace while he sought out the guard, and begged that that gaunt figure might not be allowed to disturb them again.

"The frightened Count left that city in a few days; Stéphanie, meanwhile, having vainly striven to find the poor wanderer who tracked her steps. But what can a young girl do? Her weak efforts to discover him were futile indeed. The Count travelled from place to place; but at Rome, Paris, Brussels the same wild figure burst through intervening crowds, and struck Stéphanie senseless with his haggard face.

"Day by day the girl seemed perishing of some great sorrow unspoken. At length, when thinking the change might save her life, her father pressed her to marry, she flung her arms around him and whispered the truth.

"'I pine for the free forest, father. I pine to see Gustave again. Everywhere I go I hear his voice—everywhere I see the deep dells, the rugged hills, the foaming rivers of the Ardennes. Take me home; let me die there.'

"The man's pride gave way.

"'Try to live, my child,' he said. 'If you love this young man, he shall be my son.'

‘He sought the outcast now as earnestly as he had tried before to avoid him, but the search was useless. And in sorrow and gloomy foreboding, he travelled to the Ardennes with his sick daughter.

“There are strange mysteries in our nature—I speak as a doctor—but strangest of all these are those mystic forewarnings of the future which we call forebodings—those prophetic voices, which at times speak to the soul in clear and awful tones.

“Whether these brought Gustave hither, whispering that Stéphanie was coming, who shall say? I can but tell you that, in the wood where they parted there she found him. As the carriage drove beneath the solemn, arched roof of leaves, he stood forth to meet it—a madman—a child as she had left him, ready to weep, to laugh, to play, as in the old days when they were children together.

“Gustave told you truly. She wept upon his breast, and she died for sorrow.

“She had come in hope, and it was quenched; she had come in love, and it was drowned in pity. The shock, the grief killed her. On the last day of her life, as we stood around her, she turned suddenly towards her father, and thanked him sweetly for bringing her hither.

“‘I die where I had wished to die,’ she said, ‘where my mother closed her eyes, in my *home*, with all I love around me. Turn my face to the window that I may see the forest again. Poor Gustave! take care of him when I am gone away. And, father, bury me at St. Elmo, and let him one day lie by my side.’

“The Count obeyed her. After his daughter’s funeral he left us, a broken man. As for me, I moralise, and wonder why the sins of the parents fall so heavily on the children. I ask, too, whether the Count’s pride or Mary Grey’s disobedience caused all this sorrow?”

This was the Doctor’s story. Thus from different lips have I woven together the sad history of Gustave le Fou. He went by that name for many years, and when he died, they laid him by the side of a grave, on which there stood a single stone with the simple inscription—“STEPHANIE. Aged 19.”



ODD CUSTOMS AND STRANGE STORIES.

IT is an old saying that there is nothing new under the sun. Do we not see the poke bonnet of our ancestors revived in some of the fashionable hats of the present day? We have only to open an old book to behold how nearly the ladies' dresses of a hundred years ago resemble those which may now be seen parading the streets of London. And so with other matters also.

If we look at the drama, there, too, has fashion changed about. No one's plays were more admired in his day than those of Shakespeare, and everyone hears much talk about them now, but what estimation were they held in when Charles the Second was king? Mr. Pepys, who was a good representative of his time, calls "Midsummer Night's Dream" the most insipid, ridiculous play he ever saw; the "Taming of the Shrew" a silly play; "Othello" (which he appears at first to have liked) a mean thing; "Henry the Eighth" a simple thing made up of many patches, and with nothing good in it besides the shows and processions. He makes, however, an exception in the case of "Macbeth," which he acknowledges to be a pretty good play. Even Dryden, who defended Shakespeare, only ventured, with some timidity, to pronounce him to be equal, if not superior, to Ben Jonson.

But we may go back many ages before these times and yet find that there is nothing new. The wonderful discoveries which have been lately made, show how clever men have been able to draw out of the dust-heap of ages mouldering old myths and fables of the greatest value. Keys, in fact, by which we are enabled to unlock the doors which till recently appeared hopelessly barred, and bring to light the secrets which have so long puzzled the heads of philosophers and historians.

The earliest work of art—older than any literary monument, and prior to the first whisperings of tradition—the *human language*, forms an unbroken chain from the first dawn of history down to our own times. It is the feeling that in order to know what man is we must not shut our eyes to what man has been, which leads so many, in this busy and restless age, to give up their time to studies which, to the thoughtless, may seem useless and childish.

How did the old Greek, Socrates, for instance, view humanity? With the Greeks, every one who was not of that people was only a barbarian, an inferior sort of creature altogether, very fit to be made a slave of and bullied. But where the Greek saw only a slave and a barbarian, we now see a brother and an ancestor.

How wonderfully odd also are some of the *customs* which crop up

continually in various parts of the world among peoples and tribes who apparently could have had no *connection* with each other.

Who could believe that there was one single tribe, however silly in other respects, which should carry its folly so far as to demand that on the birth of a child the father should take to his bed while the mother attended to all the duties of the household. Yet we are told that there are few customs more widely spread than this, attested by historical evidence during nearly 2,000 years. Marco Polo found it existing among the Chinese in the 13th century, and the same custom was still in practice a few years ago among the modern Basques.

This absurd custom is also described by Du Tertre as in use among the Caribs in the West Indies. When a child is born the mother goes presently to her work, but the father takes to his hammock, and there he is visited as though he were sick, and undergoes a course of dieting which would cure of the gout the most replete of aldermen. How anyone can fast so long and not die is perfectly wonderful. For six months he eats neither birds nor fish lest the child should participate in the natural faults of the animals on which the father had fed. For instance, if the parent were to have an aldermanic taste for turtle, the child would be deaf and have no brains.

The only explanation of this mystery is to be found in the pages of *Punch* where a great fat nurse is depicted going upstairs with the baby in her arms, the real *master* of the house, while the nominal owner is seen meekly getting himself out of the way. "Without exaggerating the treatment which a husband receives among ourselves," says Mr. Max Müller, "at these interesting periods, not only from mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and other female relatives, but from nurses—in fact, from every servant in the house—it cannot be denied that while his wife is suffering, his immunity from pain is generally remarked upon with jealous anger; and if anything goes wrong for which it is possible to blame him, he is sure to hear of it. If his boots are creaking, if his dog is barking, if the straw has not been properly laid down, does he not catch it?"

So much for some of the customs which attend man's entrance into the world, but are there not some which follow him out of it quite as fantastic? "He that hath the ashes of his friend," says Sir Thomas Brown, "hath an everlasting treasure." Savages who never seem to have thought of incineration have religiously preserved the bones of their friends. There is a custom among certain American Indians of depositing food in the graves of their friends, which drew forth the quaint remark: "The devil makes them believe that they are to live again in a kingdom which he has prepared for them, and that they must take with them provisions for the journey." A story was told by an Indian missionary that when a violent-tempered old officer died, the poor natives placed brandy and cigars upon his grave to propitiate his manes.

And now, leaving old customs, we must turn to the sun and moon

to get to the beginning of strange stories. We may rest certain that if we can find nothing in them it is because we have not discovered the key with which to unlock their secret.

How different do the Greek stories appear now that we know how they arose. What a charm is added to them when we perceive that they are simply a collection of sayings by which men once upon a time described whatever they saw and heard in countries where they lived. We see the lovely evening twilight die out before the coming night, but when the Greeks saw this they said the beautiful Eurydice had been stung by the serpent of darkness, and that Orpheus was gone to fetch her back from the land of the dead. We see the light which had vanished in the West re-appear in the East, but they said Eurydice was now returning to the earth.

Sometimes these myths have been condensed into proverbs, and in this form have wandered over the face of the world. The well-known proverb, "Many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," is but a modern form of a very ancient Greek verse, which points the legend of the Samian king, Aucæus. He had planted a vineyard, but a seer had warned him that he would not live to taste its fruit. The wine was made, and the king was raising the first cup to his head with the mocking laugh of scorn at the prophet, who contented himself with saying, "There is much between the edge of the cup and the lip," when word was brought that a wild boar was ravaging the royal fields. Aucæus set down the untasted goblet, seized his spear, rushed out, and was killed by the animal.

It is wonderful to see how the traces of ancient civilisation break forth in transient flashes through the darkness of the middle ages. So much so that at times we seem almost tempted to believe the idea that all the acquirements of the Greeks and Romans had been transmitted to them as the wrecks and fragments of the knowledge then possessed by sages and teachers who were afterwards swept away from the globe by some vast catastrophe.

The connection of the Northern nations, from whom the English derive their origin, with the Orientals is shown in nothing more clearly than in the belief in magic. The Goths came from the neighbourhood of Colchis, the region of witchcraft, and the country of Medea, so famous for her incantations. She was the lady, as everyone knows, who cut up her old father and then boiled him—like the boy in the Zulu tale who served his grandmother a similar trick. The youth persuaded the old woman to play with him at boiling each other. The game was to begin with him, a proposal to which the old dame readily assented. But he took care to prevent the water from boiling, and after having been in the pot for some time, he insisted on the old grandmother fulfilling her part of the bargain. He put her in and put on the lid. She cried out, "Take me out, I am scalded to death." He said, "No, indeed, you are not. If you were scalded to death, you could not say so." So she was boiled, and said no more.

The Norman peasants still believe that there is a flower on which if anyone treads he will continue walking round and round, thinking that he is going onward, though, in fact, never quitting the spot. This is further suggestive of the story of the old Oxford Don who, on leaving a party where the wine must have been a little too attractive, put his hand against the circular railings which surround the theatre at that place, in order to steady himself, but while thinking he was going home all right, he was only walking round and round the same spot, which he continued to do till he was discovered next morning by some early-rising friend.

I found in turning over the pages of an old volume of the *Quarterly Review*, a very interesting account, which seems to me to throw much light upon the manner in which these strange stories may originally have been formed.

The writer says that he was present at a recitation, in the Piazza of St. Mark, on the subject of the persecution of the Christians under Nero, a very favourite event with the people. He thought that the reciter must have been reading an Italian translation of Tacitus, and that he combined the facts of the historian with the miracles of the legend. But he afterwards found that the reciter derived his stories from certain political romances written towards the beginning of the seventeenth century.

According to one of these wonderful novels, which far surpass the wildest dreams of the most gifted dealers in sensation at the present day, the Venetian story-teller informed his hearers that Rome was peopled by three millions of Christians; the soldiers of Nero murdered them all every morning; in the course of the day they were all miraculously raised from the dead by St. Peter and St. Paul, who were confined in the tyrant's prisons, and on the morrow the martyrs of yesterday were all ready to be killed over again.

As the story-teller was aware that the common people delight in horrors, he gratified them with agonies and tortures to their hearts' content. Whilst speaking of the Roman empress and the Roman princesses, he illustrated their characters by comparing them with certain Venetian ladies who held a conspicuous station in the scandalous chronicles of Venice. This amused the people very much, he only slightly varied his story in repetition, and seemed to rely on no premeditated plan.

And this we may suppose to have been very much the method used by the story-tellers of the middle ages; which shows us that there is still a connection between those days and the present time, and that in the Italian story-tellers of to-day we have one of the truest and best exponents of scenes long passed away.

E. B.

THE MATCH-MAKER.

THE weather had been fine and genial in the earlier part of the day, but since three o'clock it had become dreary and overcast. It was now raining in that hopeless manner that it does rain in February, when the atmosphere is laden with vapour, and the evergreens look draggled and woebegone, whilst the gaunt boughs of the naked trees glisten and shine in wet and inky blackness against the dull sky.

Yes, it was dull and dreary out of doors. But within the bright firelit drawing-room of Stockleigh Manor it was pleasant and comfortable enough: so comfortable that, but for the ceaseless splash on the glass of the conservatory, you might have remained in ignorance of the state of affairs without. The pretty rooms—for there were two, shaded from one another by the heavy crimson curtain that hung half across the dividing archway—looked particularly inviting, with so many cosy chairs and little tables scattered about, and the fickle firelight shone on the bright Broadwood grand piano, on the china and knick-knacks that ornamented the rooms, and on the delicate water-colours that graced the walls.

It was just the hour in which to indulge in a quiet reverie. So thought Miss Margaret Courtenay—Aunt Margaret, as she was generally called—as she walked softly across the otherwise unoccupied drawing-room, and settled herself cosily in one of the inviting easy chairs. She had made her toilette for dinner, and was dressed in a soft grey material, with just a little pink introduced into the trimming to prevent its being too sombre in effect. Aunt Margaret always wore soft, flowing drapery, a style that suited her slim, graceful figure. Miss Margaret Courtenay, was an old maid—at least, so the world and her nephews and nieces styled her—an old maid of forty summers.

There are old maids and old maids. There are born old maids and married old maids, old maids by choice and old maids because they cannot help it. Aunt Margaret is an old maid by choice; she is a maiden lady with a story, and is treated with great respect and consideration accordingly. No one exactly understands what this story is, for Aunt Margaret is very reserved about her own affairs, and not even her brother, Mr. Courtenay, with whom she now lives, knows anything about it. She is younger by twenty years than himself, and it was while he was away making his fortune in India that the romance of her life was played out. It is generally believed, however, that she was on the eve of being married, and she has been heard to say that it was her own fault that she was not. By thus skilfully throwing a drapery over a mass of detail, probably of a very ordinary and unromantic character, she unconsciously invests her life

with a dignified reserve, and becomes a person of considerable interest in her circle.

Since the breaking-up of her home, caused by her father's death, she had spent many years abroad ; had lived in Paris, and sojourned in the Pensions of Switzerland ; had wintered in Brussels, and visited Vienna ; had spent some time in the various towns of Italy, and paid many visits to the studios of Rome. She had extended her travels to the East, had looked down on Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, had visited Bethany, and stood on the shores of the Dead Sea. Her conversation was therefore most entertaining and amusing, but she never intruded her knowledge ; and, in the refined, delicate lady before you, you would scarcely divine the energy that had prompted her to see so much.

Indeed, though well-bred, she was shy and nervous ; at the same time well able to take care of herself. She was never seen at needle-work, but had always writing to do in the morning, after which she took her usual constitutional walk, and the newspapers and a book finished the day. She could take a hand at whist if required, or play some dreamy melodies on the piano—a sort of playing that rather accompanied conversation than stopped it—and was always quietly pleasant and agreeable both in society and in her brother's family, in which she had for the last twelve-months resided. She wore her auburn hair in the style of her youth, in long curls on either side of her pale sentimental face, with a narrow white parting dividing the front and back, and a soft coil of hair behind. Her hands were slim and white, and invariably shaded by a fall of lace, which made them look smaller than they really were.

This, then, is the picture that I wish to present to my readers—a pensive maiden lady, sitting in the firelight in a handsome drawing-room. I wish it were in my power to tell them her story, but of that I am as ignorant as are her nephews and nieces. All I know is that some misunderstanding had arisen between her and her lover, which, on the very eve of the wedding, had resulted in the breaking-off of the marriage. Some time afterwards Miss Courtenay found that she had been too hasty in her decision, that the reports she had received from well-meaning friends were exaggerated, and in many cases untrue ; but the discovery came too late for her to repair her error : Mr. Elwell had left England, and Margaret Courtenay grew into an old maid.

This had happened twenty years ago ; and now, within the last fortnight, these two had met again.

Brothers take little interest in their sisters' love affairs, and moreover, Mr. Courtenay, it has been said, was in India at the time, and if he had ever heard the name of John Elwell he had long ago forgotten it. Therefore, when, having gained a lawsuit, he asked the barrister he had retained to run down for a few days with him to his house in Leicestershire, he had no idea that he was bringing the long-separated lovers together.

But so it was. There was a start and a bow, a flush, and a constrained shake of the hands; and then there was a secret between them, for neither confessed to having known the other before. We can scarcely therefore be surprised at the pensive attitude that Aunt Margaret has assumed. A fortnight spent in a country house in the wet month of February is necessarily a trying time to two people with a secret. Both had discovered that the years had made no difference in their feelings for one another, but both were too diffident or too proud to make any overtures towards a reconciliation.

There is no doubt that many unfortunate people have stumbled over this same stone. Two people have honestly and truly loved one another, but either from pride or diffidence, or perhaps both, the mutual confessions have never been made, and the two lives which might have flowed harmoniously together diverge into different channels.

It is oftentimes necessary, to prevent such a catastrophe, that a third party should step in and gently remove the obstacle that prevents the union, and here the much-abused office of match-maker may honourably and fairly be brought into play. No such friendly mediator had stepped in between John Elwell and Margaret Courtenay, and offended pride on his side, and prudish reserve on hers, were the stumbling-blocks over which these two were tripping. Aunt Margaret gave way still more to day dreams, and John Elwell prolonged his stay; but the divided streams still fought against the stones, and were as far from unity as ever. Aunt Margaret's day dreams were, however, broken in upon on this occasion by the hero, John Elwell himself, who advanced towards the fire rubbing his hands with satisfaction, and exclaiming:

"Ah, Miss Courtenay, nothing makes a room look so cheerful as a lady by the fireside. I hope that you were not caught in the rain this afternoon."

"I was not out," returned Miss Courtenay. "At this time of the year, morning seems to be the best time for constitutional exercise. I invariably walk between twelve and one."

"The winter's walk at noon.' What is it Cowper says?—

"The night was winter in its roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon,
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The Season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of June.'"

"May," corrected Aunt Margaret.

"Of course. I am forgetting all my poetry. A man generally does, unless he has women and children about him."

"And very frequently when he has them," said Miss Courtenay, looking pensively at the fire.

"True. Yet even should the actual poetic nature die out of a

man, there is a certain softness and loveliness infused into his life by his being brought into contact with women and children."

"Whilst often with women the love of poetry drifts into sentimentalism, where it is not associated with the sterner common sense of men," said Margaret, speaking more to herself than to him.

"That shows how dependent the one sex is upon the other, and how it was never intended that either should live alone."

Miss Courtenay discreetly changed the subject, and began talking about the morning's news, inquired if the evening papers had arrived, and discussed the various telegrams. "Having been abroad so much, I naturally take an interest in what is going on in the world," she said; and so the conversation drifted into indifferent subjects.

It wanted half an hour to dinner-time, and none of the other members of the household had as yet made their appearance. Gradually the conversation died away, and these silly blunderers sat staring into the fire as though they hoped to find fresh fuel for discussion in the flames. Now and again a new topic was started, first by one and then by the other; but as neither seemed to have much to say, each returned to the thoughtful scrutiny of the fire. This process of making conversation became very irksome: Miss Margaret roused herself, and determined to make a more vigorous effort; John Elwell did the same; they both seized upon a subject, simultaneously withdrew their gaze from the fire, and opened their lips to speak; their eyes met, and they laughed.

There was a rustle, and the words "Kiss me" sounded gently through the room.

John Elwell started, and a thrill of pleasure shot through him. At last, then, Margaret had come to her senses, and the offer of reconciliation was made. It did not occur to him that it was odd that a lady, and so refined and particular a lady as Miss Courtenay, should make so decided an overture. The mist of twenty years cleared away, and he saw before him but the girl bride, anxious to be forgiven and to be taken again into favour.

He rose from his chair, rather slowly and tremblingly it must be allowed, and respectfully saluted her. A flush of pleasure overspread Aunt Margaret's usually pale cheek.

"It is of no use trying to make talk when both our hearts are full of the same thoughts," said he, as he drew his chair close to hers, and managed to possess himself of her hand. "It is twenty years since we parted, Margaret, and yet I love you as dearly at forty-five as I did at twenty-five, and sometimes I have dared to hope that you have not forgotten me."

"No, John, I have never forgotten you," she replied softly.

"And have you forgiven me?" he asked.

"I was misinformed. There was nothing to forgive."

"You were too hard upon me, it is true, Margaret, and it has cost us twenty years of happiness."

"Why did you not speak sooner, John?"

"Because, Margaret, I was determined that the first overtures should come from you."

"From me!" said Aunt Margaret, flushing. "How could you expect me to make overtures to you?"

"But you *have* done so," he returned, bending towards her as though again to caress her.

"What do you mean?" she cried, drawing herself away.

"Nay, nay," said John Elwell, soothingly; "you must know, Margaret, that you made the first advances."

"I did no such thing," returned Margaret.

"I should never have spoken, had you not said ——"

"What?"

"Well—'Kiss me.'"

Aunt Margaret was now really offended. "Why, you asked me to kiss you," she said, with heightened colour.

"I protest I did not. You whispered it as softly as possible."

"For shame, John! You said it just—as you used to say it in the old days."

"On my oath, Margaret, I never did."

"I suppose you know what an oath is," said Miss Courtenay, doubtfully.

"I think so. I have enough to do with them, in court."

"And you would take your oath that you did not ask me?"

"I will do more. I will take my oath that you asked me."

Aunt Margaret stood looking at him with a flush on her delicate cheeks, thinking that he really meant only to perplex her. "John, you know me better," she said softly; "you are doing this to tease me, but you should not."

"Kiss me," again echoed through the room; and then followed the sound of a kiss and a whisper of "Oh, you darling!"

"There is some one in the next room!" cried Mr. Elwell, and they sprang apart like guilty creatures.

They moved towards the curtain between the two drawing-rooms, and confronted Nellie, Aunt Margaret's eldest niece, who, with her cousin, Harry Martin, was advancing to meet them.

"I am very sorry, Aunt Margaret," cried Nellie. "We did not mean to be eavesdroppers, but I was so wet when I got in from my ride that I came to warm my feet before going up to dress, and Harry came in with me."

"So it appears. And you have been warming your faces too," said Mr. Elwell, laughing and pointing to Nellie's fair cheeks.

"The fire *is* rather fierce," she returned.

"The fire or the kisses?" he asked, laughing; "but there, we will not tell tales out of school."

"Nevertheless, Nellie, I am rather surprised at your conduct," said Aunt Margaret, primly.

"Come, come, this won't do," cried Harry. "We are ready enough to keep your secret, but I can assure you that we have not been following your good example."

"I should think not," said Nellie. "I never *asked* anybody to kiss me in my life."

"Then who was kissed, and who was the darling?" asked John Elwell, slyly.

"Aunt Margaret," replied Nellie, stoutly.

"Oh, Nellie, you shamefaced little coquette," said Aunt Margaret, rebukingly.

"I only wish it *had* been Nellie," said Harry; "but I can answer for it that it was not."

"Kiss me! Kiss me! Oh, you darling!" was wafted softly through the room, and a whole shower of kisses followed this affectionate outburst.

"Good heavens!" they all exclaimed at once; "there is a third couple in the room."

"Let us light the gas and discover the culprits," said Harry, producing some wax matches from his pocket.

The firelight was soon quenched, and every corner of the drawing-room illuminated, but no other parties were to be seen. Harry and Mr. Elwell looked behind curtains and chairs, carried a light into the conservatory, and peered about amongst the orange trees and camellias: the place was empty.

"Some one must have been playing us a trick," said the two gentlemen, returning.

"Or the room is haunted," suggested Miss Courtenay in a whisper.

"By the spirit of St. Valentine," cried Nellie, "for to-morrow is the fourteenth of February."

"The season when the birds choose their mates," said Harry, "and——"

But he was interrupted by Nellie, who fell on the sofa in convulsions of laughter, tossing off her riding hat, and shaking her bright blonde hair into soft curls about her shoulders.

"Oh, auntie, auntie! I shall die of laughing! To think of our being such geese! It is the bird in the corner, Aunt Margaret; the new parrot that papa brought home yesterday."

Yes! there, sure enough, sat Polly in her grey dress and red trimmings, laughing softly to herself in imitation of Nellie's more joyous peal. "Kiss me," she cried, with her head coquettishly aside.

"The mystery is solved," said Nellie, rising and gathering up her habit. "Nevertheless, Aunt Margaret, I am rather surprised at your conduct."

"I shall be surprised if you are not late for dinner, Miss Nellie," said Aunt Margaret, "unless you go upstairs at once."

"Quite true; there goes the first bell. Come along, Harry, for you

can't appear in boots and gaiters." And they heard them laughing together as they stumbled upstairs.

"They are having a fine joke together at our expense," said Miss Courtenay.

"And we at theirs," returned Mr. Elwell. "Well, Margaret, do you think now that I understand the nature of an oath?"

She laughed.

"And will you allow me to register a vow in your behalf sometime next month?"

"I do not know about next month," said Margaret, blushing as rosy red as a young girl; but here her mouth was stopped.

"I have lost twenty years, and will wait no longer," cried John Elwell, and Margaret felt there was nothing more to be said.

The dinner party was long in mustering that evening. Nellie and Harry were late, of course, but Aunt Margaret, the precise Aunt Margaret, who had been dressed an hour ago, what could she mean by keeping the soup waiting? Even when the truants did appear they were so quiet that Mr. Courtenay rallied them on their gravity.

"The weather must have affected you," he said; "you are all as dull as ditch-water. Bring round the wine, Smith"—to the butler.

"You are not vexed with me, Aunt Margaret?" said Nellie, in the course of the evening.

"No, dearest; I am not vexed."

"I really came in to warm my feet, you know; and, auntie, dear, I am so glad; I know all about it. Mr. Elwell is the man you ought to have married years ago, and now you have made it up again, and papa is so pleased, and so are we all."

"It was the parrot's doing," said Aunt Margaret.

"St. Valentine's, you mean—and he managed another match, too," and Nellie lowered her voice to a whisper. "Somehow or other I kept tumbling over my habit as I went upstairs, and Harry was obliged to help me, and when we reached the landing ——"

"Well, Nellie?"

"Harry said that he did not think St. Valentine's advice should be thrown away, and so he kissed me, and—and—and we are engaged, Aunt Margaret."

The double wedding took place early in the spring, in the Stockleigh Parish Church, and I never heard that any of the parties ever repented taking St. Valentine's advice. The parrot was always a great favourite with both the brides; she lived to an honoured and respected old age, and in the family ever after went by the name of "The Match-Maker."

M. L. W.



THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER X.

A COSTLY MANIA.

THE residence of Mrs. Lynn at Blackheath was a substantial, old-fashioned, roomy house on the heath, standing alone within a high wall surrounded by trees. And to this house, on the Monday morning, went her son, Francis Grubb, carrying with him his burden of ill news. The same fatal news which the old serving-man, Reuben, had already taken to Moat Grange.

In the morning-room sat Mary Lynn, glancing over a short letter she had just written. She started up in what looked like alarm when her brother entered.

"Oh, Francis!" she exclaimed, a hectic colour flushing her face, "what have you come to-day for—now? Is it to bring me ill news?"

"Why do you imagine that?" he asked, rather struck with her words—and her looks. "Can't a business man come out to pay a morning visit, Mary, without bringing ill news with him? My wife and the baby are going on well, if you are thinking of them."

He spoke in a half-jesting tone, making light of it at first. It was *not* usual with him to leave the City at this early hour. Mary glanced at the open letter on the table. She wore a cool muslin dress of a pinkish colour, and was looking altogether fresh and fair and pure—but sad.

"How is mamma?" he asked.

"Not at all well; she is keeping her room to-day," said Mary. Mr. Grubb, standing so near, could not fail to see that the letter was written to Robert Dalrymple. The reader may like to see its contents.

"MY DEAR ROBERT,—Considering that you and I ceased to correspond some years ago, you will be surprised at my writing to you. I have no doubt all proper-minded old ladies, including my mother, would shake their heads at me. Will you just drop me one line in

answer, to say how you are, and how the world is using you, and please let it be by return of post. I have a reason for asking this. Pardon the trouble ; and believe me ever affectionately yours,

“MARY ISABEL LYNN.”

“*Have* you brought me ill news, Francis ?” she repeated. “About Robert Dalrymple ?”

Her brother looked at her. “Again I ask you, Mary, why you should put the question ?”

“I will tell you,” she said : “at the risk of your laughing at me, Francis ; and that I know you will do. I have had a dream about Robert, and it has made me uneasy.”

“A dream !” he repeated in surprise. But he did not laugh.

“It was last Friday night,” she went on. “I came home from your house rather tired, and—and troubled ; troubled about Robert. I had seen that he was in great trouble himself ; in fact, he told me so ; but he would not tell me its nature. The world was using him hardly—that was the most explicit admission he made. I could not get to sleep at first for thinking of him ; not before one o’clock, I daresay ; and then I had a terrible dream.”

“You should not think of dreams, child,” put in her brother. “But go on.”

“I thought we were in some gloomy room, Robert and I. At the end of it was a small door, closed, with an opening at the top protected by iron spikes. Beyond that narrow opening nothing could be seen, for it was dark. Robert stood near this door, facing it in silence, as if waiting for it to open, and I stood some yards behind him, waiting also. Some trouble seemed to lie upon both of us, some apprehension, but I know not what ; something that could not be spoken of : it filled my heart to sickness. Suddenly the door began slowly to open ; and as the intense darkness beyond began to disclose itself more and more—a black, inky darkness that seemed to reign in illimitable space—a most frightful terror took possession of me, a terror more awful than can ever be experienced in life. Robert turned and looked at me in token of farewell, still in silence—and oh, Francis, I shall never forget the despairing misery depicted on his face. He turned it away again, and took a step towards the door, now quite open. I rushed forward with a scream and caught his arm on its threshold. ‘No, no, you shall not go out there !’ I shrieked : ‘stay, and pray for deliverance.’ This awoke me ; awoke me to the same vivid terror I had felt in the dream,” concluded Miss Lynn, “and just afterwards the clock struck two.”

“Two ?”

“Two. I lay in the most extreme agitation for the rest of the night ; instinct whispering me that some ill had befallen Robert. With the morning the feeling in some degree passed away, and the occupations of the day served still more to deaden it : several visitors called on Saturday. Nevertheless, the dream has haunted me ever

since like a nightmare. Not a word of the sermon yesterday morning could I take in. When mamma asked me what the text was when I got home from church, I was obliged to say I could not remember it. So, this morning, I thought I would write a line to Robert, asking if things are well with him—for anxiety and suspense yet cling to me.”

Her voice ceased. Mr. Grubb made no comment.

“Has any ill happened to him, Francis?” she continued, her face raised wistfully. “Have you come to tell it me?”

Oh, it was a hard task, this, that was imposed upon him. Far harder than the one that had fallen to Oscar Dalrymple at Moat Grange in Berkshire. For the natures of the two men were essentially different: the one stoically calm; the other warm, generous, loving. Francis Grubb took his sister gently by the hand.

“Let us go into the open air, Mary; to the quiet shrubbery. What I have to tell you, I will tell you there.”

It was a most terrible thing to have come to pass. Better that the ill-fated Robert Dalrymple, when in the very act of self-destruction, had arrested himself, and prayed to God for deliverance as Mary Lynn seemed to have implored him to do in her dream.

And if any latent doubt lingered in the minds of fond relatives, this was to be extinguished. Some three weeks after the fatal night, he was found in the water, near Millwall: quite unrecognisable in himself, but identified by his clothes. The jury brought in a more merciful verdict than was passed on his uncle before him—“Temporary Insanity;” and he was buried in the nearest churchyard.

As to his creditors, they were not paid. There was nothing to pay them with. With the exception, however, of his gambling debts, it turned out that Robert did not owe much. Mr. Grubb had got back Farmer Lee’s five hundred pound cheque—and Mr. Grubb, Reuben, and Oscar, to whom it was alone known, kept that matter secret from the farmer and from the world.

Oscar Dalrymple had come into the Grange, and would take possession of it as soon as Mrs. Dalrymple could, at her convenience, move out. Oscar, cold and calculating though he was, could but come forward to Mrs. Dalrymple’s rescue. It fell to him to keep her and her daughters now. He spoke to her in a kindly, generous tone, letting nothing appear of the inward wincing he possibly may have felt. She had absolutely no resource in the world, save Oscar. They had a distant relative indeed, one Benjamin Dalrymple, living in the West of England; a crusty old man, who was reported to be very rich and had made his money at cotton spinning; but this old man had created quite a deadly feud between himself and all the Dalrymple family; and Mrs. Dalrymple would starve rather than apply to him. Better be under an obligation to Oscar than to him: though she did not over well like that. Oscar proposed (perhaps he felt he could do no less) that she and her daughters should still

make the Grange their home; but Mrs. Dalrymple declined. A pretty little house on the estate, called Lawn Cottage, was assigned to her use, rent free; and two hundred pounds per annum. Oscar remonstrated against the smallness of the pittance, but she absolutely refused to accept more. With her poultry and fruit and vegetables, and the milk from her one cow, Mrs. Dalrymple assured him she did not see how she could spend even that. So she and her daughters removed to Lawn Cottage, and Oscar entered upon his reign at the Grange.

A year had gone by. London was in a commotion: nothing was talked of in its gay circles but the young and lovely bride, Mrs. Dalrymple. Peers were going mad for her smiles; peeresses condescended to court them. Panics do sometimes come over the fashionable world of this great metropolis: now it is a rage for speculation, like that railway mania which once turned people's sober senses upside down; now it is the new and very ugly signora, who is ruling the boards and the boxes at Her Majesty's Theatre; now it is an insane sympathy—insane in the working—with all the black Uncle and Aunt Toms in the western hemisphere; but at the time of which we are writing, it was the admiration of one of themselves, a woman, the beautiful Mrs. Dalrymple.

She was charming: not because fashion said it, but that she really was. Naturally fascinating, the homage she received in the gay world—a new world to her—rendered her manners irresistibly so. Some good wives, staid and plain, who had never been guilty of courting a look in their lives, and prided themselves on it, avowed privately to their lords that she laid herself out for admiration, and was a compound of vanity and danger; and the lords nodded a grave approval, and the moment they could get out of sight, went running in the wake of Mrs. Dalrymple.

A stylish vehicle, much favoured in those days by young fellows with little brains and less prudence, something between a brake and a dandy-horse, with two stylish men in it, especially in the extent of their moustaches, was driving down Regent Street. He who held the reins, Captain Stanley, was attending to some object at a distance rather than to his horse; his head was raised, his eyes were intently fixed far before him. A cab whirled suddenly round the corner of Argyle Place: Captain Stanley was too much absorbed to avoid it, and the two vehicles came into contact with each other.

No damage was done. All that came of it was a wordy war: for the cabman's abuse was unlimited, and Captain Stanley retorted in angry explosion.

"Is that the way you generally drive in London?" quietly asked his companion, as they went on again.

"An insolent reptile! He shall smart for it. I'll have him before the magistrate at Marlborough Street."

"Don't call me as a witness, then. It was your fault. You got into the fellow's way."

"I didn't get into his way."

"At any rate you didn't get out of it, which amounts to the same thing. I ask if that is your usual mode of driving?"

"What if it is?"

"It is a careless one. The next time you offer me a seat, Stanley, I shall propose to take the reins."

"I thought I saw her carriage before us," explained Captain Stanley, in a more conciliatory tone, as he began to recover his good-humour. "It made me blind to everything else, Winchester."

"Who is 'her'?" demanded Lord Winchester, who had just returned from a prolonged sojourn on the Continent.

"The loveliest woman, Winchester! I can tell you you have got a treat in store: you'll say it when you get introduced to her. I couldn't exist," added the Captain, twirling his moustache, "without a daily sight of that angel."

The Viscount smiled. He knew, of old, Captain Stanley's propensity to go into heroics over "angels:" he did so himself upon occasion. "Mrs. Stanley to be?" asked he, indifferently, by way of saying something.

"No such luck. She's married. And so am I."

"Pardon, Stanley; I forgot it. When a fellow marries over in India, the fact is apt to slip out of one's memory."

"By Jove! here she comes! She has turned back again. The green carriage and dark livery. I knew I saw it. Isn't she ——"

"Take care of your horse," interrupted Lord Winchester; "here's another cab."

"Hang the cabs! Look at her."

An open barouche was approaching. One lady sat within it. Lord Winchester caught sight of an exquisite toilette, and then, the point-lace parasol being slightly moved, of an exquisite face. A young face, looking younger, perhaps, than it really was; clearly cut, delicate features; cheeks of a rich damask, brown glossy hair, and soft dark eyes of wonderful brightness.

"There's a picture for you!" murmured the enamoured Captain Stanley, letting his horse go as it would. "And the face is nothing to her fascination when you come to talk to her. She has sent half London wild."

Off went his hat, for the bright eyes were smiling, and the fair head bowing to him. But off went Lord Winchester's also: for a brighter smile and a more familiar recognition, though one of surprise, greeted him.

"Halloa, Winchester! I say, that's too bad!" cried Captain Stanley, when they had passed. "You know her?"

"Knew her before I knew you. She's Selina Dalrymple."

"Selina: yes, that is her Christian name; I saw it one day on her

handkerchief. Where was the use of your making a mystery over it? Why couldn't you say that you knew her?"

"I made no mystery, my good fellow. I did not know it was Selina Dalrymple you were speaking of. I used to meet her years ago at Court Netherleigh. Whom has she married? What's her name?"

"What is the matter with you?" cried Captain Stanley, looking at the Viscount. "You call her Selina Dalrymple, and then ask what her name is. Do you suppose she bears one name, and her husband another?"

"She has never married Oscar Dalrymple!" exclaimed Lord Winchester, in a lively tone. "Has she?"

"Her husband is the only Dalrymple I know of in the land of the living. A cold, dry, wizen-faced man."

"So ho, Oscar Dalrymple! It is better to be born lucky than rich. Moat Grange and its fairest flower! You did not bargain for that, once upon a time. Poor Robert Dalrymple: he was nobody's enemy but his own."

"You mean her brother. He went out of the world ungenteelly, I believe, as Miss Bailey's ghost says. I did not know him."

"The Oscar Dalrymples are up in town for the season, I suppose?"

"Ay. They have taken part of a small house in Berkeley Street—not being rich."

"Anything but that, I should fancy."

"It is said he did not want to come to town; hates it. Only, her heart was set upon it, and he can't deny her anything."

"Oh, that's it, is it," returned Lord Winchester.

That was it. Selina Dalrymple, the bride of a month or two, had made Oscar promise that they should spend part of the season in town. Vain, giddy, and thoughtless, Selina's heart was revelling in the pleasures of this London life, her head turned with the admiration she received. Alas! she had all too speedily forgotten the tragical end of her once-loved brother, though it came but a year ago. Amidst all this whirl of gaiety there was no time to remember *that*.

Mrs. Dalrymple's carriage had continued its course. It was now on its way to her dressmaker's, Madame Damereau. Dead now, and the once large business dispersed, Madame Damereau, a Frenchwoman, was famous in that gone-by day. An enormous custom—clientèle she used to call it—had she. Her house was handsome, and, so far as its appearance went, strictly private. It was in a private street amid other handsome houses, and there was nothing to betray its business save the brass-plate on the wide mahogany door—"Madame Damereau." It was as handsome inside as out; its rooms were a mixture of Parisian taste and English comfort, with their velvet carpets, rich crimson furniture, brilliant mirrors, and ornamental objects of porcelain, all delicate landscape painting and burnished gold. Surely rooms, so elaborately fitted up, were not

needed to carry on the business of a milliner and dressmaker, great though that business was! Needed or not, they were there. Madame Damereau had taste, and liked them. There was a hall and a reception-room, and a painted glass door at the end of a passage, as the clientèle turned to ascend a handsome staircase; through which glass door might be caught glimpses of a paved court with green shrubs and plants. Above the stairs came an ante-room, and a trying-on room—and I know not how much more. Madame Damereau was as fascinating, in her line, as Mrs. Dalrymple in hers: ask the ladies who were for ever paying her visits, and they would tell you that, once within reach of the fascinations of herself and her show-rooms, there they were contentedly fixed; there was no getting away, and there was no trying to get away. Madame's expenses were very great, and she had feathered her nest pretty well: somebody paid for it. When madame's nest should be sufficiently well feathered—or what she would consider so—it was her intention to return to la belle France—pays chéri!—and quit England and its natives—les barbares!—for ever. Every thought of madame had reference to this enchanting finale: not a dress did she make, a bonnet sell, a mantle improvise, but the charges for them (very high generally) were made with this one desirable end in view. Apart from this propensity to gain, madame was not bad at heart. Very good, in fact; and many a little kindness did she enact in private, especially to her poor countrymen and women, domiciled here. What though she did stick on ruinous prices for those who could pay?—a person must live. *Que voulez-vous?*

There had been a Monsieur Damereau once upon a time. He had something to do with the theatres, though not in the way of acting. But he grew too fond of English porter and of fingering madame's profits. Madame inveigled him into a journey to Paris with her; let him have his fling a little while, and one fatal morning the poor deluded man awoke to find that he and his wife were two; she had obtained a separation from him "*de corps et de biens.*" Madame returned to England the same day, and what became of him she neither knew nor cared; except that he regularly drew the annuity she allowed to him, and which was to cease if he ever re-set his foot in the British Isles.

At the period of which we are writing, a great mania had seized upon the gay London world. That other mania, admiration for Oscar Dalrymple's wife, and which chiefly concerned the men, was but a small and private one; this was public and universal, and pertained to the women. It was a love for dress. A wild, rampant love for extravagant dress, not to be controlled within any limit. No fever yet known was like unto it; and Madame Damereau blessed it heartily, and petted it, and nursed it, and prayed—good Catholic that she was!—that it might never abate. We who have come to a certain age (than which nothing was ever more uncertain) can re-

member this, and the commotion it wrought. It was not the ordinary passion for finery that obtains in the beau monde, more or less, at all times, that is prevailing now, but something worse—different. In truth it was a very madness; and it ruined thousands. Few had fallen into this insidious snare as completely as Mrs. Oscar Dalrymple. Bred up in the country, in simplicity and comparative seclusion, London and its attractions had burst upon her with irresistible power, dazzling her judgment, and taking captive her senses. The passion for dress had been born with Selina. No wonder, therefore—example is so contagious, rivalry so rife in the human heart—that it had, with its means of gratification, seized frantic hold of her; just as another passion had formerly seized upon and destroyed her unfortunate brother. Not caring particularly for her husband, the world's homage had become as second life to her vain (and somewhat empty) mind; and of course she must dress accordingly and go out at all times and seasons armed for conquest. At breakfast gatherings, in afternoon visits; at teas, I was going to say, but kettledrums had not then come into vogue; in the park, at dinners, at the play, and in the ball-room, she would be conspicuous for the freshness and beauty of her toilette.

Does the reader remember a remark made by Miss Upton, of Court Netherleigh? "Selina Dalrymple is fonder of dress than a French doll. Lack of sense, and a love of finery, often go together."

Poor Oscar Dalrymple, knowing nothing of the mysteries of a lady's toilette, or its cost, was content to admire his wife's, as did other men. And, it may be, that no thought ever intruded itself into Selina's mind of the day of reckoning that must inevitably come.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH MADAME DAMEREAU.

MRS. OSCAR DALRYMPLE'S carriage stopped at the door of Madame Damereau. Other carriages, waiting for their ladies, drew aside for it, and Mrs. Dalrymple descended. Rather tall, very elegant, her dress of delicate lilac silk, flounced to the waist, became her well, and her rich white lace mantle became that. The Damereau footman threw open the door for her, and she went up to the show-room. A lady in plain black silk, but than which nothing could be more rich of its kind, with a small cap on her head of costly lace, and lappets of the same, disengaged herself from a group, to whom she was talking, and came forward, bowing; such bows that only a Frenchwoman can achieve. It was Madame Damereau. A clever-looking woman, with a fair skin, and broad smooth forehead.

What could she have the honour of doing to-day for Madame Dalreemp?

Mrs. Dalrymple scarcely knew. If put upon her conscience, she

perhaps could not have said she wanted much. She would walk round first, and see. Was there anything fresh?

The Frenchwoman put the tip of one of her white fingers (very white they were, and displayed some valuable rings) upon the glove of her visitor, and then passed carelessly through the door to the next room. Madame Damereau certainly favoured Selina, who bought so largely of her, and never grumbled at the price. Selina understood the movement, and, stopping to look at a displayed article or two in her way, as carelessly followed her. That was madame's pet way when she was bent upon doing a good stroke of business.

"Tenez—pardon, madame," quoth she, as soon as Selina joined her, and speaking in scraps of French and English, as was her custom: though she spoke both languages equally well, barring her accent of ours—which was more than could be said for the clientèle, taking them collectively, and hence, perhaps, the origin of her having acquired the habit—"I have got the rarest *caisse* of articles arrived from Paris this morning. Ah! qu'ils son ravissants!"

"What are they!" cried Selina, with breathless interest.

"I have not shown them to anybody: I have kept them en cachette. I said to my assistants, 'You put that up, and don't let it be seen till Madame Dalreemp comes. Il-y-à une robe—une robe—une robe!' impressively repeated madame, turning up the whites of her eyes—"ma chère dame, it could only have been made for you!"

Selina's eyes sparkled. She thought herself the especial protégée of the Damereau establishment—as many another vain woman had thought before, and would think again.

"Is it silk?" she inquired.

"No. Dentelle. Mais, quelle dentelle! Elle ——"

"Madame," said one of the assistants, putting in her head and speaking in a low tone, "the Countess wishes to see you before she leaves."

"I am with her ladyship in the moment. Madame Dalreemp, if you are not too hurried, if you can wait till some of these ladies are gone, the *caisse* shall be brought out. I will not show it while they are here; I want you to have first view."

"I am in no hurry," replied Mrs. Dalrymple. "I have not been here for two days, so shall give myself time to look round."

As Selina did, and to gossip also. Several of her acquaintances were present. Lady Adela Grubb for one. Adela was looking a little worn and weary. A discontented expression sat on her face, not satisfactory to see, and she evidently did not take the enraptured interest in those fine articles, displayed around, that Selina took. Of course they were all "superbes" and "ravissant," as madame was given to observe: still a show-room, even such a one as this, tempting though it undoubtedly is, does not bear for everyone quite the fascination of the basilisk.

Amidst other ladies who came in was Selina's old neighbour in the country, Mrs. Cleveland, the rector's wife. Selina was surprised.

"I am only up for a day or two, my dear," she said. "I shall call in Berkeley Street before I go back."

"And how is mamma?" asked Selina.

"She is pretty well, my dear, and Alice too. Mary Lynn is staying with them."

"Oh, is she? You never told me that," added Selina, turning to Lady Adela.

Lady Adela's mouth took rather a scornful curve. "Do you suppose Miss Lynn's movements concern me, that I should hear of them? When did you see Aunt Margery last, Mrs. Cleveland?"

"At church on Sunday."

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Selina, as they were slowly walking round the room to look at the stock of displayed wares: some on stands ranged against the walls, some on a large centre table. The ladies moved from one sight to another with enraptured gaze.

"What is beautiful?" asked Mrs. Cleveland. "That mantle?"

"Which mantle? That old dowdy black silk thing! I meant these sleeves. See, there's a collar to match."

"Yes, ma'am," interrupted one of the assistants, "we never had anything more beautiful in the house."

"What are they?" inquired Selina.

The young woman, attired in black silk only a degree less rich than madame's and a gold chain, her hair arranged in the newest fashion, carried the sleeves to her mistress.

"What am I to ask?" she said, in a low tone.

"Twelve guineas."

"It is for Mrs. Dalrymple."

"Oh—I thought it was Madame Cliv-land. Fifteen guineas."

"They are fifteen guineas, madam," said the young person, returning. "And dirt cheap."

"I inquired what description of lace it was," said Mrs. Dalrymple. "Not the price."

"It is Venice point, madam. Real Venice point."

"I think I must have them," cried Mrs. Dalrymple. "Are they not tempting?"

"Not to me," laughed Mrs. Cleveland. "I have too many little pairs of live arms to provide for, to give that price for a pair of sleeves."

"Only fifteen guineas," remonstrated Selina. "And that includes the collar. I will take these sleeves," she added to the young woman.

"Thank you, madam."

"Those are pretty, that muslin pair."

"Very pretty, madam, for morning. Will you allow me to put these up with the others?"

"I don't mind—yes, if you like," replied Selina, never asking the price. "I saw Lord Winchester just now," she resumed to Mrs. Cleveland. "I did not know he had returned."

"Only since a day or two, I believe. My husband does not care to renew our acquaintance with him, so ——"

"Oh, what a love of a bonnet!" unceremoniously interrupted Mrs. Dalrymple, as her eye fell on a gossamer article, all white lace and beauty, with something green sparkling and shining in it.

"Ah," said madame, coming forward, "*ce chapeau me rend triste chaque fois que je le vois.*"

"Pourquoi?" demanded Selina, who was not quite sure of her French, but liked to plunge into a word of it now and then. In those days French was not so universal a language, even in polite circles, as it is in these.

"Parce que je ne suis pas dame, jeune et belle. Ainsi je ne peux que le regarder de loin. Mais madame est l'une et l'autre."

Selina blushed and smiled, and fixed her eyes on the bonnet.

"It is a charming bonnet," observed Mrs. Cleveland. "What is the price?"

"Thirteen guineas, madam."

Thirteen guineas! Mrs. Cleveland shook her head. Such bonnets were not for her.

"It is a high price," observed Selina.

"High! Mesdames have surely not regarded it closely. These are emeralds. Look well, *ma chère Madame Dalreemp*. Emeralds. It is the very cheapest bonnet—for its real value—that I have shown this season."

"I think I will try it on," cried Selina.

Madame was not backward to follow the thought. In a twinkling the bonnet was on Selina's head, and herself at the glass. Twitching the border and the flowers, twitching her own hair, she at length turned round with a radiant face, blushing in its conscious beauty, as she spoke to Mrs. Cleveland.

"Is it not a sweet bonnet?"

"If you do not take it, it will be a sin against yourself," interposed the bonnet's present owner. "You never looked so well in all your life, *Madame Dalreemp*. Your face does set off that chapeau charmingly."

"I will take it," decided Selina. "What did you say it was? Fifteen guineas?"

"Thirteen, madame; only thirteen. Ah! but it is cheap!"

Mrs. Cleveland bought the mantle Selina had designated as dowdy, and a bonnet equally so. Selina told her they were frightful; fit for an alms-house.

"My dear, they are quiet, and will wear well. I cannot afford more than one new bonnet in a season. As to a mantle, it generally lasts me three or four years."

"Look at this handkerchief," interposed Selina, thinking what a dreadful fate Mrs. Cleveland's must be. "I really think it matches the sleeves and collar I have bought. Yes, it does. I must have that."

"That's a dear handkerchief, I know," cried Mrs. Cleveland. "What is it, Madame Damereau?"

"That—oh, but that's *recherché*, that is," said madame, in a rapture. "Nine guineas. Ah!"

"Send it home with the other things," said Selina.

"I am going," said Mrs. Cleveland. "I have bought all I came to buy, and it is of no use staying here to be tempted, unless one has a long purse."

"The truth is, one forgets whether the purse is long or short in the midst of these enchanting things," observed Selina.

"I fear it is sometimes the case," was Mrs. Cleveland's reply. "Are you coming, my dear?"

"Not yet," answered Selina.

Lady Adela went out with Mrs. Cleveland. She had not given a single order; had not gone with any particular intention of giving one, unless she saw anything to especially take her fancy. But Madame Damereau's was regarded as a favourite lounging place, and the gay world of the gentler sex liked to congregate there.

"Can I drive you anywhere?" asked Adela of Mrs. Cleveland, as they stood on the steps of Madame Damereau's handsome entrance door. "Will you come home with me?"

"Thank you, I wish I could," was the answer. "But when I do come to London I have so many little commissions to execute that my time has to be almost entirely given to them. I shall hope to call and see you the next time."

"I wish you would come and stay with me for a week," cried Adela quickly. "It would be a charity—an oasis of pleasure in my lonely life."

"Lonely from the want of children," thought Mrs. Cleveland, with a sad, faint smile.

"Are you quite well?" asked Adela quickly, some delicacy in Mrs. Cleveland's face striking her.

"I—hope I am," was the hesitating answer. "At least, I hope that nothing serious is amiss. It is true I have not felt quite right lately, have suffered much pain; and one of my errands here is to see a physician. He has made an appointment for to-morrow morning."

Adela renewed her invitation, wished her good day, and watched the rather fragile form away with a wistful look. They never saw each other again in life. Before two months had run their course, poor Mrs. Cleveland had gone where pain and suffering are not.

Meanwhile, when the show-rooms had thinned a little, Madame Damereau had the "*caisse*" brought out: that is to say, the contents

of it. The *caisse* was taken for granted ; the articles only appeared. The chief one, the lace dress, new from Paris, and secluded till that moment from covetous eyes, was of a species of lace that madame called *Point d'Angleterre*. Madame shook out its folds with tender solicitude, and displayed its temptations before Mrs. Dalrymple's enthralled eyes. Madame did not speak : she let the dress do its own work : her face spoke eloquently enough. Selina was sitting on one of the low crimson velvet ottomans, her parasol tracing unconscious figures on the carpet, and her own elegant silk gown spread out around her.

"Oh dear !" she ejaculated, withdrawing her enraptured gaze. "But I fear it is very dear."

"Never let madam talk about that," said the Frenchwoman. "It *is* high ; but—look at it. One could not pick up such a dress, as that, every day."

"How I should like it !"

"The moment we took this dress out of the *caisse*, I said to Miss Atkinson, who was helping me, 'That must be for Madame Dalreemp : there is no other lady who could do it justice.' Madam," she quickly added, as if an idea had just occurred to her, "fancy this robe, fine et belle, over a delicate pink glacé or a maize !"

"Or over white," suggested Selina.

"Or over white : Madame Dalreemp's taste is always correct. It would be a dress fit for a duchess, too elegant for many of them."

Some silks of different colours were called for, and the lace robe was displayed upon them successively. Selina went into ecstasies when the peach-blossom colour was underneath.

"I must have it. What is the price ?"

"Just one hundred guineas, neither more nor less ; and to anybody but Madame Dalreemp I should say a hundred and twenty. But I know that when once she appears in this before the world, I shall have order upon order. It will be, 'Where did you get that dress, ma chère Madame Dalreemp ?' and madam will answer, 'I got it of Damereau ;' and then they will come flocking to me. *Ainsi, ma bonne dame*, I can afford to let you have your things cheap."

"I don't know what to say," hesitated Selina, taking in, nevertheless, all the flattery. "A hundred guineas ! it is a great deal : and what a bill I shall have ! that lace dress I bought three weeks ago was only sixty."

"What was that lace robe compared with this ?" was madame's indignant rejoinder. "That was nothing but common Guipure. Look at what the effect of this will be ! Ah, madam, if you do not take it I shall not sleep : I shall be vexed to my heart. Just as madam pleases, though, of course. *Milady Grey* did come to me yesterday for a lace dress : I told *milady* I should have one in a week's time : I did not care for her to see it first, for she is short, and she does not set off the things well. I know she would give me one hundred and twenty for this, and be glad to get it."

This was nearly the climax. Lady Grey, a young and pretty woman, dressed as extravagantly as did Mrs. Dalrymple, and there was a hidden rivalry between them, quite well known.

"There is another lady who would like it, I know, and she has but just gone out—and a most charming angel she is. I do speak of the Lady Adela ——"

This was quite the climax, and Selina hastily interrupted. Lady Adela was even more lovely than she herself was; very much, too, in the same style of delicate beauty. What would Adela be in that lace dress!

"I will take it," cried Selina. "I must have a slip of that peach glacé to wear underneath it."

"It will be altogether fit for a queen," quoth madame.

"But could I have them home by to-morrow night for Lady Burnham's party?"

"Certainly madam can."

"Very well then," concluded Selina. "Or—stay: would white look better under it, after all? I have ever so many white glacé slips."

Madame's opinion was that no colour, ever seen in the earth or in the air, could, or would look as well as the peach. Milady Grey could not wear peach; she was too dark.

"Yes, I'll decide upon the peach-blossom," concluded Selina. "But that's not a good silk, is it?"

"Si. Mais si. C'est de la soie cuite."

"And that is all, I think, for to-day."

"What will Madame Dalreemp wear in her hair with this to-morrow night?"

"Ah! that's well thought of. It must be either white or peach."

"Or mixed. Cherchez la boîte, numero deux," quietly added madame to an attendant.

Box, number two, was brought. And madame disentangled from its contents of flowers a beautiful wreath of peach-blossom and white, with crystallised leaves. "They came in only to-day," she said. Which was true.

"The very thing," cried Selina, in admiration. "Send that with the bonnet and sleeves to day."

"Madam ought to wear amethysts with this toilette," suggested Madame Damereau.

"Amethysts! I have none."

"It is a great pity, that. They would look superbe."

"I was admiring a set of amethysts the other day," thought Selina, as she went down to her carriage. "I wish I could have them. I wonder whether they were very out-of-the-way in point of cost? I'll drive there, and ascertain. I have had a good many little things there that Oscar does not know of."

She entered her carriage, ordering it to the jeweller's; and with

her pretty face reposing amidst its lace and its flowers, and her point-lace parasol shading it, Mrs. Dalrymple, satisfied and happy, bowed right and left to the numerous admiring faces that met and bowed to her.

That same evening Madame Damereau, having dined well and taken her coffee, proceeded to her usual business with her cashier, Mrs. Cooper. A reduced gentlewoman, who had tried the position of governess till she was heart-sick, and thankfully left it for her present situation, where she had less to do and a liberal salary. Miss Atkinson and Miss Wells, the two show-room assistants, came in. It was necessary to give Mrs. Cooper a summary of the day's sale, that she might enter the articles. They arrived, in due course, at the account of Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Dress of Point d'Angleterre," cried Madame Damereau. "One hundred guineas."

"Which dress is it she has bought?" inquired Mrs. Cooper, looking up from her writing. She had learnt to take an interest in the sales and the customers.

"The one that the Baroness ordered for her daughter and would not have when it came," explained madame. "I then sent it to the Countess of Ac-corn, who was inquiring about a lace robe yesterday morning: but it seems she did not keep it. She never knows her own mind two hours together, that Milady Ac-corn."

"It is a very nice dress," remarked Mrs. Cooper.

"It is a beauty," added Miss Atkinson. "And Lady Acorn need not have cried it down."

"Did she cry it down?" quickly asked madame.

"She said it was as dear as fire's hot."

"Par exemple!" uttered madame, with a flashing face. "Did she say that?"

"Yes, madame. So Roberts told me when he brought it back."

"She's the most insolent customer we have, that Femme Ac-corn," exploded madame. "And pays the worst. The robe would have been cheap at the price I asked her—eighty guineas."

"Mrs. Dalrymple, lace robe, one hundred guineas," read Mrs. Cooper. "What else—making?"

"Making, two guineas. Peach glacé slip comes next."

"Peach glacé slip," wrote Mrs. Cooper. "The price, if you please?"

"Put it down in round figures. Ten guineas. She did not ask."

"I sold her those morning sleeves with the little dots," interposed Miss Wells. "There was no price mentioned, madame."

"What were they marked?" asked madame.

"Fourteen and sixpence."

"Put them down at a guinea, Mrs. Cooper. Making peach glacé slip—let me see, no lining or trimming—say fourteen shillings. White point-lace bonnet, thirteen guineas. Sleeves and collar—what did I say for that, Miss Wells?"

"Fifteen guineas, madame : and the handkerchief nine."

"Sleeves, collar, and handkerchief of Venice point, twenty-four guineas," read Mrs. Cooper. "She must be rich, this Mrs. Dalrymple."

"Comme ça, for that," quoth madame.

"She has had far more than a thousand pounds in the last six weeks. I suppose you are sure of her, madame? She is a new customer this season."

"I wish I was as sure of getting to Paris next year," responded madame. "Her husband has not long ago come into the Dalreemp estate. And the English estates are fine, you know. These young brides will dress and have their fling, and they must pay for it. They come to me : I do not go to them. The Dalreemps are friends of the Cliv-lands, and of those rich people in Grosvenor Square, the Grubbs, which is quite sufficient passe-port. You can go on now to Madame Cliv-land, Mrs. Cooper : one black mantle, silk and lace, three pounds ten shillings, and one fancy straw bonnet, blue trimmings, three guineas."

"Is that all there is for Mrs. Cleveland?"

Madame shrugged her shoulders. "That's all. I would not give thank you for the custom of Madame Cliv-land in itself; but they are well connected, and she is a gentle, good woman. I thought she looked ill to-day."

"There was Mrs. Dalrymple's wreath," interrupted Miss Atkinson, referring to a pencil list in her hand.

"Tiens, I forgot," answered madame. "What were those wreaths invoiced to us at, Miss Wells? This is the first of them sold."

"Twenty-nine and sixpence each, madame."

"Peach-and-white crystallised wreath, Mrs. Cooper, if you please. Forty-nine shillings."

"Forty-nine shillings," concluded Mrs. Cooper, making the entry. "That is all, then, for Mrs. Dalrymple."

And a pretty good "all," for one day, it was, considering Mr. Dalrymple's income.

CHAPTER XII.

A LECTURE.

A SMALL, friendly dinner-table, Mr. Grubb and Lady Adela presiding. A thin, sharp-featured, insignificant little man, whose evening clothes looked the worse for wear, and who wore a black watered ribbon across his waistcoat in lieu of a gold chain, sat at Lady Adela's right hand. It was Colonel Hope. To look at him and his attire, you would have said he did not know where to turn for a shilling : yet he was the possessor of great wealth, and had seen hard service in India. Beside Mr. Grubb sat the Colonel's wife, Lady Sarah ; a tall, portly woman, whose face bore much resemblance to her mother's, Lady

Acorn. Grace and Frances Chenevix and Mr. Howard completed the party : the latter was a staid, stiff old gentleman of sixty, with iron-grey hair and whiskers, and a stern face. He and the Colonel had known each other in early life, when each had the world to fight for fame or fortune. Each had fought it well, and won, certainly, so far as fortune was concerned. The Colonel was just home from India, and Mr. Grubb had given the two early friends a speedy opportunity of meeting. One place at table was empty, and the young lady who sat next it, Frances Chenevix, did not look quite pleased at its being so. It was intended for Gerard Hope, who had somehow failed to make his appearance.

Colonel Hope had retired from the army and was come home for good. About a year ago he and Lady Sarah had lost their two sons, lads of seven and eight, from fever. They had no other children, and it was generally supposed the Colonel would make his nephew, Gerard, his heir. The Colonel and his wife were both tired this evening, having been looking at houses all day. Frances had been with them, but she seemed fresh and bright as a lark. The Colonel had bought a pretty little property in Gloucestershire, but Lady Sarah wished for a town house also.

"I think I shall take it, though it is rather small," observed the Colonel, talking of one of the houses they had seen. "There'd be room for a friend or two as well as for ourselves : and for Gerard also, if I decide to adopt him. By the way—what is your opinion of that young man, Grubb?"

"As to looks, do you mean, Colonel?" smiled Mr. Grubb. "They are good. I don't know much else of him."

"Thought you did," growled the Colonel, who was a hot-tempered man, and liked plain answers to his questions.

"I know nothing against him," said Mr. Grubb, emphatically. "I have seen but little of him, but that little I like."

"He is very nice and very good, and quite worthy to be adopted by you and Sarah, Colonel," spoke up Lady Frances in her free way. "I'm sure the manner he slaves away in that red-tape office he is chained to, ought to be a gold feather in his cap."

"A gold feather?" repeated the literal Colonel, looking at the speaker questioningly. While Mr. Howard, who knew what "slaving away" amounted to in a red-tape office, indulged in a silent laugh.

"Well, ought to tell in his favour, I mean," said Frances, amending her speech.

"I suppose he only does what he is put to do—his daily work," contended the Colonel. "That he cannot shirk : he has nothing to look to but his salary to pay his way. There is no merit in doing one's simple duty."

"I think there is a great deal, when it is such hard work as Gerard's," contended Frances. And this time Mr. Howard laughed outright at the "hard work."

"Perhaps the hard work is keeping him to-night," suggested Mr. Grubb, with just the ghost of a smile.

"No," said Frances, "I think the office closes at four."

"Oh," cried the Colonel. "Where is he then? What does he mean by staying away?"

"He is run over, of course," said Frances; "and taken to the nearest hospital. Nothing short of that would have kept him away."

Lady Sarah Hope looked down the table at her sister. "Is Gerard in love with you, Frances?"

"In love with me!" exclaimed the young lady, her face flushing vividly. "What ridiculous fable will you imagine next, Sarah?"

"Is it a fable?" added Lady Sarah, struck with the flush.

"What else should it be?" laughed Frances. "Gerard could not think of falling in love upon nothing a year. Nothing a year, and find himself! That has been his case, poor fellow—or something near akin to it."

"That may be remedied," remarked Lady Sarah. She had caught up an opinion upon the subject, and she held to it in future.

As the small line of ladies filed out of the dining-room, Lady Sarah, walking first, turned just outside the door to wait for her sister Adela. Mr. Grubb, who was holding the door open, said something to his wife in an undertone as she passed him. Adela made no answer whatever; save that her lifted face put on a look of scorn, and her lips took a downward curve.

"What did your husband say to you?" asked Lady Sarah, having fancied that she heard her own name—Hope.

"I don't know—or care. As if I should listen to anything he might say!" contemptuously added Lady Adela.

Lady Sarah stared. "Why, child, what do you mean? He is your husband."

"To my cost."

"What do you mean? What does she mean?" continued Lady Sarah, appealing to the other two sisters, for Adela had not deemed it necessary to lower her voice. They did not answer. Grace took up an album, her face wearing a sad look of pain; Frances walked into the other drawing-room.

"I insist upon knowing what you mean, in saying Mr. Grubb is your husband *to your cost*," cried Lady Sarah, returning to the charge. She was so much older than Adela—looking, in fact, old enough to be her mother, for India's sun and the loss of her children had greatly aged her—that she took her to task at will. Lady Sarah, like her mother, had always displayed somewhat of a propensity for setting the world to rights.

"It is to my cost," spake Adela defiantly. "That I should be *his* wife, obliged to stand as such before the world, a man of *his* name, a tradesman!" And the emphatic scorn, the stress of aversion laid on the "his," no pen could adequately express. "I never hear myself

announced, 'Lady Adela Grubb,' but I shiver ; I never see it in the *Morning Post*, amid the lists at an entertainment, or perhaps at Court, but I fling the paper from me. As I should like to fling *him*."

"Bless my heart and mind, what's in a name?" demanded Lady Sarah, having listened like one astounded.

"Grubb! Grubb!" hissed Adela from between her dainty lips. "There is a great deal in *that* name, at any rate, Sarah. I hate it. It is to me as a nightmare. And I hate him for forcing me to bear it."

"Forcing you to bear it! Why, you are his wife."

"I am—to my shame. But he had no right to make me his wife ; to ask me to be his wife. Why could he not have fixed upon anybody else? Grace, there, for instance. She would not have minded the name or the trade. She'd have got used to it—and to him."

Lady Sarah Hope nodded her head four or five times in succession. "A pretty frame of mind, is that you are cherishing, Adela! Leave off such evil speaking—and thinking. Your husband is a true gentleman, a man that the world may be proud of; he can hold his own as such anywhere. As to the house in Leadenhall Street, it is of world-wide fame—the idea of your calling him a 'tradesman!'—Let me speak!—Where can you find a man with so noble a presence, so refined and sweet a countenance? And I feel sure that he is good and true and generous in himself as he is distinguished in reputation and person."

"All the same, I scorn him. I hate him, for having fixed on me. And it is the pleasure of my life to let him see that I do," concluded Adela, in sheer defiance, as she tossed her pretty head.

"Cease, Adela, cease!" interposed Grace, coming forward, her hands lifted imploringly. "You little know the wickedness of what you are saying; or the evil you may be laying up for yourself in the days to come. This is not your true nature; you are but forcing it upon yourself to gratify a resentment you have persistently taken up. How often have I prayed to you to be your own true self!"

"Pray for it yourself, child," cried Lady Sarah, laying her hand with a firm grasp upon Adela's shoulder. "Pray upon your bended knees to Heaven, to snatch and shield you from Satan. Most assuredly he has got into you."

"What has got into me?" asked Adela with languid indifference, not having caught the words.

"The devil," angrily amended Lady Sarah.

That infant of Lady Adela's, little George, did not live. Just for a month or two, just long enough for her to get passionately attached to him, to use every means to make him strong, he lingered. Then there came three days of illness, and the little soul fled from the feeble frame. No other child had been born, and Lady Adela seemed to be left with no end or aim in life, save that of cherishing resentment against Mr. Grubb. She took it up more fiercely than

ever, and she let him feel it to his heart's core. The still, small voice of conscience, warning her that this was a forced and unnatural state of mind, could not always be deadened. The very fact of its pricking her caused her to resent the pricks, and to nourish her ill-omened temper the more persistently. Francis Grubb's life was not one of fair skies and rose-leaves.

"I should like to shake it out of her—and I wonder he does not do it," ran the thoughts of Frances Chenevix, as she opened the piano in the next room and began to play a dashing march.

Very especially just now was the Lady Adela Grubb resenting things in general. Captain Stanley—who had set up a flirtation with her when she was but a slip of a girl, and with whom it had pleased her to fancy herself in love after he sailed for India, though that was pure fancy and not fact—had taken no notice of her now that he was home again, save that demanded by the ordinary usages of society; and at this Lady Adela felt mortified—slighted. He had not as much as said to her, "So we are both married, you and I, we cannot sit in corners any more to talk in whispers: ' on the contrary, he spent his time talking with newer beauties, Selina Dalrymple for one. It was quite the behaviour of a bear, decided Adela; and she was resenting it by showing temper to the world.

Frances Chenevix dashed through the march. Its last bars were dying into silence, when she thought she heard footsteps on the stairs. Going to the door, she saw Gerard Hope.

"Well, and what account have you to give of yourself?" began Frances, as he took her hand.

"I was at a water party at Richmond," breathlessly answered Gerard, who had been having a race with time.

"Well I'm sure! And here have I been vowing to them that nothing could have kept you but being run over in the streets; and Colonel Hope thinks you are detained over the red-tape duties. You might have come for once, Gerard."

"I couldn't possibly, Frances; I couldn't land; and then I had to dress. The tide kept us out. It has vexed me above a bit, I can tell you."

"You look vexed," she retorted, regarding his laughing countenance.

"I *am* vexed; but it is of no use to weep over it. You know I want to stand well with my uncle. I suppose you have finished dinner?"

"Ages ago."

"Where are the rest of you ladies?"

"In the next room, quarrelling. Lady Sarah is treating Adela to a bit of her mind—and she deserves it. Now, Gerard, behave yourself. What do you want to come so close to me for?"

For Mr. Gerard Hope was squeezing himself beside her on a small ottoman, meant for only one portly personage. He did more than that: he stole his arm round her waist.

"I believe Uncle Hope wants to adopt me," cried Gerard. "Won't it be jolly! No more scratch, scratch, scratch away with a pen all the blessed day."

"I called it 'slavery' to them just now," interrupted Frances.

"Good girl! No more getting up by candle-light in winter, and trudging off through the frost and through the thaw without breakfast, which you have not had time to take! It will be a change—if he does it. I'm not sure of it yet."

"You don't deserve it, Gerard."

"No! Why don't I? I'd try and be a good nephew to him—as dutiful as the good boy in the spelling-book. I say, Frances, has he been asking about me? getting references as to character?"

"Yes, he has," was the perhaps unexpected answer. "Just as if you were a footman. Mr. Grubb said he did not know much of you; but what he did know he liked. Hark! They are coming out of the dining-room. And if you want any dinner you had better go there and ring for it."

"Perhaps there's none left for me."

Frances laughed. "I heard Mr. Grubb whisper to his wife that if Gerard Hope came he was to go into the dining-room."

Gerard rose, went out, and met the gentlemen. Frances stayed where she was, and fell into a reverie. Did Gerard really love her? At times she thought so, at others she thought not.

The days wore onwards in their rapid flight. Time does not stand still even for those favoured ones who are plunged, for the first time, into the allurements of a London season: as was Selina Dalrymple.

One bright morning, when the sun was shining brilliantly and the skies were blue and the streets warm and dusty, she sat in the breakfast-room with her husband. The late meal was over, and Selina, a hot colour in her cheeks, was drumming her pretty foot on the floor, and not looking the essence of good-humour. She wore a richly embroidered white dress with pink ribbons. Mr. Dalrymple's eyes had rarely rested on a fairer woman, and his heart knew it too well.

"Selina, I asked you last night whether you intended to go to Lady Burnham's breakfast, at that rural villa of theirs. Of course if you go I will accompany you, otherwise I have some business I should like to attend to on Thursday."

"I can't go," answered Selina. "I have nothing to wear."

"Nothing to wear!"

"Nothing on earth."

"How can you say so?"

"I did think of ordering a suitable toilette for it, and was at Damereau's about it yesterday. But after what you said last night ——"

"My dear, what do you mean? what did I say? Only that you

seemed, to me, never to appear in the same gown, whether at home or out; and I begged you to remember that our income was limited."

"You said I changed my dresses four times a day, Oscar."

"Well. Don't you?"

"But everybody else does. Some change them five times. You would not like me to come down in the morning and go to bed at night in the same dress, would you?"

"I suppose not. It's of no use asking me about dress, Selina. I scarcely know one gown from another. But it does strike me that you have a most extraordinary number of new things. Go out or come in when I will, there's sure to be the milliner's porter and basket at the door."

"Would you have me look an object?"

"You never do look an object."

"Of course I don't. I guard against it. I'd give the world to go to this fête at the Burnhams'. Every soul will be there, but me."

"And why not you, if your heart is so set upon it? I think all such affairs a stupid bore: but that's nothing."

"Would you wish me to go there in a petticoat?"

"No, I suppose not. I tell you I am no judge of a lady's things. I don't think I should know a petticoat from a gown. Those are gowns, are they not, hanging in rows round the walls in the rooms above, and covered up with sheets and tablecloths."

"Sheets and tablecloths! Oscar!"

"My dear, they look like it."

"Well—if they are gowns—there's not one I can wear."

"They are all new recently," said Mr. Dalrymple. "What's the matter with them?"

"There's not one I can wear," persisted his wife.

"But why?"

"Why!" repeated Mrs. Dalrymple, in quite a contemptuous tone, for she had no patience with ignorance. "You ought to know why!"

"My dear, I really don't. If you wish me to know, you must tell me."

"*I have worn them all once,*" was the angry answer. "And some twice, and some three times. And one—— Oscar," she broke off, "you remember that lovely one; a sky blue, shot with white; a robe à disposition?"

"What is 'à disposition'?"

"Oh—a silk, flounced, and the flounces have some design upon them, embossed, or raised, sometimes of a different colour. That dress I have worn five times. I really have, Oscar; five times!"

"I wear my coats fifty times five."

"The idea of my being seen at Lady Burnham's in a dress I have worn before! No, I'd rather go in a petticoat, of the two evils, and hide my head for ever afterwards."

Mr. Dalrymple was puzzled. "Why could you not be seen, there or anywhere else, in a dress you have worn before?"

"Because nobody else is."

"Then what becomes of all the new gowns?" inquired the wondering man.

"For goodness' sake do not keep on calling them 'gowns.'"

"Dresses, then. What becomes of them?"

"Oh—they do for the country. Some few, by dint of re-trimming, can be made look new for town. You don't understand ladies' dress, Oscar."

"I have said I do not."

"Neither ought you," added Selina, crossly. "We do not worry ourselves to interfere between you and your tailors, or pry into the shape and make of your waistcoats and buttons and things, and we do not expect to have it done by us."

"Selina, let your grievance come to an end. I do not like to hear this tone of reproach."

"Then you must retract what you said last night. It was as if you wanted me never to have a new dress again."

"Nay, Selina, I only reminded you how small our income was. You must not overlook that."

"Don't be foolish, Oscar. Do you fear I am going to ruin you? What's the cost of a few dresses? I *must* have one for Lady Burnham's fête."

"My dear, have what you like, in reason," he said, in the innocence of his unconscious heart: "you are the best judge. Of course I can trust you."

The words were as the sweetest music in her ear. She sprang up, dancing to a scrap of a song.

"You dear, good Oscar! I knew you were never going to be an old griffin. I think I must have that lovely green-and-white gauze. It was the most magnificent dress. I was divided between that and a lemon-coloured damask. I'll have the gauze. And gauze dresses cost nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Next to nothing."

Selina flew up stairs. She pulled aside the "sheets and tablecloths," and glanced underneath. It was a goodly stock of robes; but yet not all the stock: for the lace, and muslin, and flimsy gauze, and delicate white, and delicate pearl, and delicate pink, and delicate other shades, were reposing in drawers, out of sight, between folds of tissue paper. Barège and balzarine: satin, plain and figured; velvet; silk, plain, damask, flowered, shot, corded, and of all the colours of the rainbow. Beautiful dresses; and yet—new, and rich, and elegant as they were, Selina Dalrymple could not go to the fête without a new one!

Away she went to Madame Damereau's. Astonishing that renowned artiste by the early hour of her visit.

"I want a thousand things," began Selina, in the blitheness of her heart. "Have you sold the green-and-white gauze dress?"

No, was madame's answer, she had kept it on purpose for Madame Dalreemp. Milady Ac-corn had come in yesterday afternoon late, and wanted it, but she had told milady it was sold.

Selina took it all in. The fact was, madame had tried to persuade Milady Ac-corn into it, but milady was proof against the price. She had wanted it for Frances. It was only seventeen guineas, and that included the fringe and trimmings. Selina had told her husband that gauze dresses cost nothing!

"I want it for the breakfast on Thursday," cried Selina. "What mantle can I wear?"

A momentous question. They ran over in memory the mantles, scarfs, fichus, possessed by Mrs. Dalrymple, and came to the conclusion that not one of them would "go with" the gauze dress.

"I have a lace mantle," said madame—"ah! but it is *recherché*!—a real Brussels. If there is one robe in my house that it ought to go with, it is that green-and-white."

She brought it forward and exhibited it upon the dress. Very beautiful; of that there was no doubt. It was probably a beautiful price also.

"Twenty-five guineas."

"Oh my goodness—twenty-five guineas!" cried Selina. "But I'll take it. A breakfast fête does not come every day."

For a wonder—for a wonder—Selina, having exhibited her white lace bonnet with the emeralds but twice, came to the conclusion that that "would do." Not that she hesitated at buying another, but that it was so suitable to the green-and-white dress.

"And now for—— Oh, stop; I think I must have a new parasol. My point-lace one is soiled, and I caught it in my bracelet the other day and tore it a little. You had a beautiful point-lace parasol here yesterday. Let me see it."

"The one you were looking at yesterday will not do," cried madame. "It is lined with blue: Madame Dalreemp knows that blue can never go with the green dress. I have got one parasol—ah, but it is a beauty!—a point-lace, lined with white. I will get it. It does surpass the other."

It did surpass the other, and in price also. Selina chose it. It was twenty guineas.

"My husband thought I could have worn one of my old dresses," observed Selina, as she turned over some gloves; "he says I have a great many. But one can only appear in a perfectly fresh toilette at a magnificent gathering such as this is to be." And madame fully assented.

Mrs. Dalrymple went to the breakfast, and she and her attire were lovely amidst the lovely, exciting no end of admiration. Very gratifying to her heart, then topsy-turvy with vanity. And so it went on

to the end of the season, and her pleasurable course was never checked.

When they were preparing to return to the Grange, and her maid was driven wild with perplexity as to the stowing away of so extensive a wardrobe, and conjecturing that the carriage down of it would alone come to "something," it occurred to Selina, as she sat watching, that the original cost would also come to "something." Some hundreds, she feared, now she came to see the whole collection in a mass.

"Of course I shall not let Oscar see the bill," she soliloquised. "I'll get it from madame before I leave: and then there'll be no fear of its coming to him at the Grange."

Mrs. Dalrymple asked for the bill; and madame, under protest that there was no hurry in the world, promised to send it in.

Selina was alone, sitting in the drawing-room by twilight, when the account was delivered to her; it was enclosed in a large thick envelope, with an imposing red seal. She opened it somewhat eagerly. "What makes it such a bulk?" she thought. "Oh, I see; she has detailed the things."

Holding it close to the window, she looked at the bottom of the page, and saw £94.

"Ninety-four pounds!" ejaculated Selina. "What does madame mean? It must be more than that."

She lighted the little taper on her writing-table; and then found she had been looking at one item only—the Venice point-lace for the decoration of a dress. So she turned the page and looked at the foot of the next.

"Antique robe, lace, trimmings, and sapphire buttons, £125. Tush!" impatiently exclaimed Selina.

With a rapid movement she turned the account over to the end, and gazed at the sum total; gazed at it, started at it, and recoiled from it. Three thousand and odd pounds, odd shillings, and no pence! What the odd pounds were, whether one, or whether nine hundred and ninety-nine, she did not catch in that moment of terror; the first grand sum of three thousand absorbed her eyes and her faculties. And there floated over her a confused consciousness of other bills to come in: one from the jeweller's, one for shawls, one for expensively-trimmed linen. There was one shawl, real India—but she dared not think of that. "Oscar will say I have been mad," she groaned.

No doubt he would.

At that moment she heard his step, coming in from the dining-room, and turned sick. She crushed the bill in her right hand and thrust it down the neck of her dress. Then she blew out the taper, and turned, with a burning brow and shrinking frame, to the window again, and stood there, apparently looking out. Selina had never attempted to sum up what she had bought. At odd moments she *had* feared it might come to something like a thousand pounds.

Oscar came up and put his arm around her, asking whether it was not time to have lights.

"Yes. Presently."

"What in the world have you got here?" cried he. "A ball."

She pushed the "ball" higher up, and murmured something about "some paper."

"What is the matter with you, Selina? You are trembling."

"The night air, I suppose. It is rather chilly."

Yet the night was hot. Mr. Dalrymple immediately began to close the window. He was a minute or two over it, for one of the cords was rough and did not go well. When he turned round again his wife had left the room.

"Selina does not seem very well," thought Oscar.

(To be continued.)



THE LILY AND THE FLOW'RET.

A LILY, fair as any born to fade,
 Upreared her stately head to greet the sun;
 And nestling underneath, low in the shade,
 Blossomed another flow'r—a fragile one.

But when she saw the sunlight streaming through
 The broad green leaves that sheltered her from this,
 And how the lily, ever fragrant, grew
 The stronger and the sweeter for his kiss,

She murmured, saying—"Must I pine alone,
 Unwooded, and lacking love, who yet am fair—
 Perchance with beauty greater than thine own,
 Since thou dost hide me with such jealous care?

"Thou hadst not been so queenly in thy grace
 Were it not thine seen and caressed to be;
 And who can tell but with a like embrace,
 In stature, as in charms, I'd rival thee."

The lily, hearing, moved her snowy crown,
 And zephyr-aided, drew her leaves aside;
 But when at noon the eager sun looked down
 Upon the flow'r, it straightway drooped and died.

My soul, and would'st thou rashly emulate
 Or envy those whose lot is higher laid?
 Be ever mindful of the flow'et's fate,
 Too ready to forsake her native shade.

SYDNEY GREY,

THE HAMMONDS' UGLY DUCKLING.

BY JOYCE DARRELL.

THERE are various ways of being distinguished. There is the tight-rope, there are the hustings, there is the dock. A Lord Mayor is a conspicuous personage—at any rate for one year. A gifted actress, a popular novelist, a professional beauty can command the suffrages and the stares of the crowd. But every one of these positions argues in the occupant some energy in well or ill-doing, some character or some talent out of the common, or, at least, some quality in excess.

But the Hammonds who lived in Crofton had a way of being distinguished which gave them no trouble whatsoever. They simply *were*. And no doubt ever troubled their minds but that the world was the better for their existence. In fact, they did not think of the world at all, except as a roomy place for them to live in; but this want of reflectiveness regarding the universe did not arise from any morbid contemplation of themselves. We may presume that the great luminary of the day, if suddenly endowed with self-consciousness and questioned as to his mission, would emit the well-founded opinion that it was an important one. So the Hammonds. They were not self-conscious, and never thought much about themselves, but if interrogated on the point, it is quite certain that their innermost, if unspoken, reply would have formulated the conviction that they were indispensable.

As it was, the only outward sign of this intimate persuasion in them was a good-humoured contempt for superiority of all sorts. Handsome people, clever people, heroic people found no favour in the Hammond eyes, but, on the other hand, they never disturbed the Hammond serenity. If they had an ideal, it was that of "a strong common sense." The head of the family, the Rev. George, had taken honours at college, not because he liked books, but because (as he frankly said) he "could not allow himself to be beaten by cads." But being a country clergyman by no means rich, his natural indifference to intellectual pre-eminence in itself had enabled him, without any conscientious pangs, to launch his sons early in life in business. They had married, were fathers of healthy normal families, and play no part in our story.

The members of the family with whom we have to concern ourselves are the daughters. These were three in number—Gertrude, Edith, and Joan. Gertrude, as the eldest, governed the motherless household. She was a typical Hammond—bouncing, good-tempered, sensible; not good-looking, of course. Edith, who had more leisure to cultivate her appearance, rejoiced in a pink-and-white beauty of

first youth that was never likely to disturb the family routine, and was regarded as the right thing in the right place—like an alabaster chimney ornament.

Joan, Edith's junior by six years, was the foreign element. To begin with, she was, as everybody noticed, singularly plain. When was anything seen so out of the way as her dark, thin face, solemn eyes, and lanky legs and arms? Then, as Gertrude always remarked, "Joan is so unlike other people." She was not stupid, it was allowed, but nevertheless, when she had reached the end of the limited curriculum which the Rev. George considered necessary for a woman, she could neither sing, nor sketch, nor dance, while for needlework of all sorts she had an abhorrence.

She would play for hours, if indulged, but Mr. Hammond hated the sound of practising, and as he always rose early, sat up late, had piles of correspondence, and the house was small, he invariably heard the piano whenever it was played, and as invariably stopped it. He only liked music of an evening, as a soothing accompaniment to digestion, and conducive to an agreeable doze. Then Edith would please him by a waltz or two, or "Annie Laurie," and that done, would (by his orders) cease. Joan was always wanting to try over queer old music, of that objectionable sort which has no tune, such as fugues of Bach, toccatas of Scarlatti, and so on.

Once, when she was quite a child, in an unguarded outburst of childish arrogance, she had said that she was born for things above the common. As might be expected, this announcement was greeted with a howl of truly fraternal derision by her incredulous brothers and sisters. They instantly nicknamed her Pope Joan, and the speech was never forgotten against her. It was her first attempt to talk about herself in her family, and it remained her last.

She had two friends, both men, and both described by Gertrude as "peculiar." One was Charles Payne, a born Bohemian, whom some odd freak had induced to marry Miss Bertha Hervey, Gertrude Hammond's greatest friend, and a bonny, commonplace young woman, as unlike himself as possible. When he proposed for her the family had given their consent, because, as was universally remarked, although Charles Payne had no money, he was so clever and commanded so much influence that he was sure to get on.

And so he had got on. He ran every day deeper and more cheerfully into debt; and every week abandoned some fresh chance of using his versatile talents afforded him by the inexhaustible patience of his friends. The only person whom this state of things did not distress was—himself. While others fumed, he was always serenely busy about something—which nobody wanted. For energy he had, only it was a perverse imp of energy, that preferred to do the thing which it was not required to do. For the rest, he was so charming that men, like Nature, lavished gifts upon him. In good health, he was cordially welcomed; in bad health, he was tenderly

nursed ; starving, he was fed ; naked, he was clothed ; idle, he was forgiven. His conversation was brilliant ; his manners were delightful ; his view of life was a perpetual application, in the most child-like good-faith, of the cynical maxim, "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own."

This elusive and enchanting being had drifted down to Crofton for Bertha, who was out of health, to be nursed for a few months by her family ; and straightway he had become a great friend of Joan's. The two used to have endless talks on every subject under heaven, and Mr. Payne expressed the opinion that Joan was clever.

"Poor, dear Joan ! It does not much matter what Charles Payne says on any subject," was Gertrude's observation, and Joan, on the whole, rather lost than gained in public favour by her new alliance.

Her other friend was a poet-cousin—only son to Mrs. Meredith, of the Hall, the great lady of the neighbourhood, and Mr. Hammond's half-sister.

This lady was a clever manager, and her indulgent, rich, and studious son left his affairs, farming and the rest of it, a good deal in her hands, while he travelled and wooed the muses. He had not distinguished himself at college, which had been a great disappointment to her, and lowered him considerably in her eyes. But if his mother snubbed him, he was much petted, in an undemonstrative fashion, by Joan. The girl liked all dumb, suffering things, and as a child had had a rare collection of maimed pets. Perhaps it was on something of the same principle that she sympathised with her shy and silent cousin Ned.

One other and very perplexing person there was who played an important part in the lives of the Hammonds, and was regarded by them somewhat in the light of a fairy god-mother.

This was an elderly maiden, extremely rich, keen and far-sighted, who was cousin to the late Mrs. Hammond. Miss Priscilla Upton—for that was her name—long years before had come to stay with her cousin Amy, and been devotedly nursed by her through a dangerous illness. "My dear," she said, in an impulse of convalescent gratitude to Mrs. Hammond, "we are both poor, but if ever I am rich I swear that I will settle £10,000 upon you."

"I should not know what to do with such a sum," laughingly answered Mrs. Hammond. "Settle it upon the poppett." (At that time there was only one of those remarkable beings in the Hammond nursery.)

"You will have hosts of poppetts, by-and-by, my dear," said Miss Priscilla. "I will settle it upon one of them."

The words were hardly out of her mouth when the post brought her the news of the death, by a boating accident, of her only brother and his only son, by which unexpected turn of Fortune's wheel she became the possessor of as many thousands as, until then, she had enjoyed hundreds of pounds a year.

Time went on, the Hammond quiver filled fast, and Miss Priscilla could not but be reminded by more than one circumstance of her rash promise. As long as Mrs. Hammond lived, she gave no hint of fulfilling it; nevertheless it is probable that it weighed upon her conscience, for she was a fairly honourable woman, although a very stingy one. However that may have been, when the gentle Amy died, in an outburst of regret and generosity Miss Priscilla wrote to Mr. Hammond that she had destined £10,000 to the member of his family who before the age of thirty should have fulfilled a certain condition.

This condition was not communicated in the letter, but it was, the writer said, set forth at length in a sealed packet deposited with Miss Priscilla's solicitor.

It may be imagined what an object of interest and curiosity that whimsical lady became to all her young cousins after that! She was made prodigiously much of by them, and seemed to enjoy the process. It is true that while they were still children her attitude towards them was marked by a certain subtle distrust. She appeared to watch them narrowly, and consistently snubbed any effort at self-assertion. But as they grew up she relaxed towards them visibly, and as they neared thirty she became increasingly suave. So much was this the case, that each in turn began to look upon him, or herself, as the future happy recipient of the magic sum.

Peter, the eldest son, was so obviously in the old lady's good graces, that—slow, honest soul!—he almost married on the expectations which she excited. George, the next eldest, was now on the verge of the fateful age, and Gertrude was but three years off it. To both Miss Priscilla was benignity itself. Edith she petted more than anybody, and the only one whom she decidedly disliked was the unlucky Joan!

Besides these uncertain chances accruing to them from Miss Priscilla, the Hammond girls, at eighteen, each came into a small legacy of £300, left to them to "do what they liked with." Gertrude and Edith had of course long ago received and partly spent their legacies, and, as this story opens, Joan had just touched hers.

II.

MRS. MEREDITH and her son, the Paynes and Dr. Jeffreys (the family doctor) had been dining with the Hammonds. It was a fresh autumn evening, and the blaze of the first logs upon the hearth was exhilarating.

"What are you going to do this winter, Payne?" asked Mr. Hammond.

"I am off to Munich. I have an order to write the article 'Bavaria' for Grüdener's new 'Encyclopædia of European History.' It is the very kind of work I have been seeking for years," answered

Charles Payne, looking up from an old score which he had been humming over analytically to Joan.

"Humph!" remarked Mr. Hammond. While Mrs. Meredith, who had some humour, smiled.

"Can't you write the article in the British Museum?"

"No," said Payne. "I require the local colour."

"And what will Bertha do away from all her friends?" asked Gertrude, in a tone not devoid of asperity.

"Bertha will have *me*," said Charles, with gentle dignity.

"But when you are absorbed by Bavaria, will she not feel rather lonely?" interposed Mrs. Meredith.

"If even she had one of her sisters with her," resumed Gertrude.

"Spare her one of your sisters," said Payne promptly.

Gertrude stared.

"Now is your opportunity, Joan. Now or never." And Charles Payne glanced with smiling encouragement at the girl bending low and nervously, it seemed, over the scattered sheets of music.

Not Gertrude alone, but everybody now looked up surprised. Joan raised a pale, determined face, and said steadily, "I wish to go to Munich to study music."

There was a general silence of sheer amazement, broken at last by a short laugh of sardonic amusement from Mr. Hammond.

"Well, well; what next, I wonder?" he said. And adjusting his spectacles he took up the *Guardian*.

What can be more dreadful than to see your grandest resolutions slipping down the vast abyss of another person's habitual indifference?

"Papa, I am quite in earnest. I wish to go," cried Joan in a tone so excited it verged on despair.

"Hush—sh! Don't shout in that way, Joan," remonstrated Gertrude, while Mr. Hammond laid down his paper with an air of resigned annoyance.

"And where is the money to come from, may I ask?" he enquired judicially.

"I have my legacy," said Joan.

"Oh!" After this there was another pause. The Hammonds were not stingy, and there was a great community of small services among them. Gertrude and Edith had both made Joan little presents out of their legacies, and they felt slightly hurt at the idea of her wishing to spend all her own upon herself.

"I feel that I should succeed," continued Joan timidly.

"You do?" said her father. "Experience may teach you the contrary, my dear."

"Then I may go," urged the girl.

"Really," said Mr. Hammond, much put out, "you are very peculiar. Go? You seem to think it is nothing to go to Munich."

"The journey is easy enough," observed Mr. Payne.

"I suppose it is you who have been putting this nonsense into the child's head?" asked his host, turning irritably upon him.

"The idea was suggested to your daughter by her own genius," answered Charles.

"Her *what*?" exclaimed Mr. Hammond; then added curtly, "Talk seriously, if you please."

"I am quite serious," retorted Charles, rather affronted. "I consider that Joan has unusual talent, and I think it is a pity that she should not follow the path which her talent points out to her."

"Pope Joan," murmured Gertrude, with indulgent mockery.

"A nice thing, indeed, if every young lady who imagines, or is imaginatively told by others, that she has talent, should go wandering over the Continent," said Mr. Hammond testily.

"I presume that you acknowledge the necessity and value of work?" asked Payne.

"Without presumption I can, I think, claim to be as much penetrated with that truth as yourself," replied Mr. Hammond.

"Work," said Payne, softly stroking his beautiful blonde beard, "is my ideal. So profoundly do I feel its holiness and beauty that the spectacle of wasted powers causes me genuine distress. Your daughter has powers which here must necessarily lie fallow. She wishes to go to Munich, where advantages of the sort that she needs abound. I, on the other hand, shall be only too happy to think that Bertha here—my wife," said Charles tenderly, "will have a companion in the long hours when my labours must deprive me of the pleasure of her society."

"It is possible that you may be more with her than you think," suggested Mrs. Meredith.

"But the real point to be considered is whether Joan ought not to go," suddenly interposed the usually silent Cousin Ned.

"I consider the whole affair the rankest folly," said Mr. Hammond.

"I cannot understand why," retorted Ned.

"Well, sir, it is possible that there are still a few things in the world which you do not understand," answered his uncle, with growing exasperation.

"Poems, dear, are not children, except metaphorically," said his mother pleasantly.

"It is a question of justice, not of feeling," persisted the young man.

An angry "Pish!" came from Mr. Hammond, while Gertrude and Edith looked quite shocked.

"Ned, be quiet!" commanded Mrs. Meredith.

Poor Joan, feeling the inutility of the discussion, and unable to listen to it any longer, rose to leave the room, when an unexpected auxiliary suddenly presented itself in the person of Dr. Jeffreys. That kindly soul had been watching her while the others were talking, and had noticed the quiver of sorrow and disappointment on the earnest young face.

"If I may be allowed to express a professional opinion, Hammond, I should say you would do well to let your daughter go."

"My dear Jeffreys! *Homerus dormitat!* Munich is notoriously one of the most unhealthy towns in Europe. Besides, what is the matter with Joan?"

"There is never anything the matter with any of us, I am happy to think," remarked Gertrude.

"Our little Joan is nervous and impressionable, and is just at a stage of mental and physical development when a thorough change would be most beneficial to her. You must remember that she differs from her brothers and sisters in not having inherited *your* constitution, Hammond," said Dr. Jeffreys significantly.

Nobody found any immediate reply to this, for Joan's birth had cost her mother her life. Moreover, she was rather like her mother in temperament, and Mr. Hammond had been devoted to his wife. Not a soul but felt, consequently, that Dr. Jeffreys had played a trump card, while Joan, with unconscious tact, followed up the advantage. Going to her father, she knelt beside his chair. "Let me go!" she murmured imploringly and caressingly. Mr. Hammond's reluctant glance rested on her eager countenance, then on the trembling little hand laid upon his arm. In her whole attitude there was an intense expression which he had never noticed before.

"I will think about it," he said coldly; and Joan rose with a feeling oddly compounded of prescient triumph and girlish remorse.

Mr. Hammond did, of course, in the following days make a few efforts to withdraw his half-given consent. But urged by Dr. Jeffreys, supplicated by Joan, and hurried on by Charles Payne (who was always tremendously energetic when other people hesitated), he finally yielded. Gertrude, with a portentous countenance of bottled-up contempt, packed Joan's things, and marked her disapproval of her conduct by allowing her to do nothing for herself. Edith repeated at intervals, "Well, Joan, you *are* fortunate!" Cousin Ned promised a speedy visit of his own to Munich; and Miss Priscilla wrote a most furious epistle. So outraged and inexplicable was its tone, that the Hammonds were at first rendered speechless by amazement; the more so that Miss Priscilla had never before interfered in their affairs. "The project," she declared, "was insensate, ridiculous. If put into execution it would be a death-blow to her belief in the Hammonds' *propriety*, RIGHT FEELING, and COMMON SENSE!!!" This was only the beginning of the letter, but the rest of it was all in the same strain.

"Just write to Priscilla and tell her that when we want advice we ask for it, Gerty," said Mr. Hammond.

But Gerty, on the contrary, wrote a very emulcient reply; for she wisely thought that it does not do to quarrel with rich old cousins for the sake of perverse young sisters.

A week later our little heroine started for Munich.

III.

THREE years had passed, but Joan's return to her father's house was still delayed. Not being much missed at home in any material sense, and resolute to remain away as long as she thought necessary, she had contrived to wring one extension of leave after another from her father. Between her and her sisters there was no very brisk correspondence, but when she did write, her letters were always reassuring.

"She says she is getting on rapidly with her music, and she appears to be in good health, which after all is the chief point. When a love of home revives in her, I suppose she will return," was the substance of Gertrude's usual answer to any enquiries for her youngest sister.

These three years had not been marked by prosperity for Mr. Hammond. He and his sister, confident in their business faculty, had been entrapped into a speculation which turned out unfortunately. The blow to their pride was almost as intolerable as the loss to their pockets. Mrs. Meredith especially felt keenly the humiliation of having to confess the catastrophe to her son, although the loss to him was after all comparatively trifling. To make matters worse he had just achieved a decided success with a tragedy in blank verse. His mother, though less displeased than astonished at the achievement, could not help feeling that, like Lady Macbeth's death, it should have come "hereafter." In old days she would have praised it, with a "critical deduction" in favour of her own inherent superiority. As it was she had to swallow the success whole, and the pill, if highly gilded, was not wholly sweet. Altogether Mrs. Meredith felt uncomfortable. And Mr. Hammond felt no less so. When they met they sat and looked at one another without finding much to say. A diminished sense of self-importance had brought with it a lessened richness of conversation. Mr. Hammond gnawed his nails gloomily and was conspicuously cross to Gertrude, who felt a natural disgust at the loss of money, and expressed it in a Hammondian "I told you so" fashion.

Things were not improved by the arrival of Miss Priscilla, with her maid and her pets, on her annual visit. It was evident that the old lady's temper did not improve with age.

"Not coming home yet!" she exclaimed tartly, in reference to Joan. "Well, I must frankly confess that I am disappointed in you, one and all. I had expected better things than that George should be so foolish (£4,000 lost, I think you said?) and that you, Gertrude, should be so weak. Studying music forsooth! Studying fiddlesticks! And when she knows counter-bass and thorough-point, or whatever the jargon is, what is she to do with them? Lead the village choir?"

"I believe she intends coming out as a composer," replied Gertrude.

"A *what*?" shrieked Miss Priscilla. "Do you seriously mean to say that she intends to drag your name—the Hammond name—

round the world on the frontispieces of polkas? I call it positively indecent."

"Cousin Priscilla!" protested Gertrude, in amazed consternation.

"An absolute prostitution!" continued Miss Priscilla, with increasing vigour of denunciation. "She might just as well be a ballet-girl. I never thought to see the day when one of your family would consent to the degradation of notoriety."

"I cannot comprehend why Joan should not write music, just as well as Peter can scribble accounts!" suddenly broke in Edith, with unwonted fire.

"For Heaven's sake, don't *you* try to be sharp," retorted the old lady, turning upon her exasperatedly. "Stick to your proper character, my dear. Your chief merit is your want of in—— I mean your want of pretension to superior intelligence."

"Why, Cousin Priscilla, I always thought you had a very good opinion of me," said Edith resentfully, beginning to cry.

"So I have," answered Miss Upton, with a mollified smile of curiously grim enjoyment. "You are my ideal of a young woman; the very girl for my—approbation" (Edith had raised a tear-stained face, but buried it in her handkerchief again at the word "approbation"). "So stop crying, do. I like you all. *All* except Joan, and I shall never be easy until she is once again living respectably under her father's roof."

And, with returning irritation, Miss Priscilla wrapped her red woollen shawl round her spare form, and precipitately left the room.

"I wish I were thirty," sighed Edith naively. "Think, if *I* am to get that money, how convenient it would be now!"

"You will be thirty quite soon enough," replied Gertrude, with some natural asperity, that age being past for her. "But as for Cousin Priscilla's money, I don't believe we shall ever get it. I think she takes a spiteful pleasure in dangling the expectation of it before our eyes; but I am certain that the condition attached to it is something impossible for us to do. Sometimes I think she wants one of us to go out as a missionary to Central Africa."

One morning Mrs. Meredith called early, with a countenance of the utmost gloom.

"Ned is going to be married," she said, and sat down in the nearest chair.

"To whom?" asked Mr. Hammond, lugubriously.

"To a German girl, a pianist from Munich," replied Mrs. Meredith.

Gertrude and Edith gave an exclamation of dismay, Miss Priscilla a savage laugh.

"That comes of studying the arts," she remarked, in unconscious contradiction to Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

"The name of this person?" inquired Mr. Hammond, with the air of a man inured to the buffets of fate.

"Klettermann," answered Mrs. Meredith, not more cheerfully.

"I think I saw something about her in one of the London papers," remarked Gertrude.

"They are all full of her. It appears she is not only very clever, but very handsome, in that queer, new-fangled style that attracts some artists. She has been taken up by a number of fashionable amateurs, and had a sudden great success. She has also published a song, which it is said shows unusual talent, especially in a woman. But, oh! what *am* I to do with her?" and poor Mrs. Meredith absolutely wrung her hands.

"Perhaps Joan knows her. By-the-by, we have not heard from Joan for more than two months," observed Edith.

"Perhaps *she* is going to be married to another pianist," suggested Miss Priscilla.

"Oh, don't!" expostulated Gertrude, who was seriously distressed, for Mrs. Meredith had quite broken down, and was weeping bitterly.

"It's no use crying, Sarah," said Mr. Hammond. "I suppose the boy is set on it?"

"Quite—*quite*!" sobbed Mrs. Meredith. "He is to bring her down to-morrow, to introduce her to me. I don't know if she is coming alone with him. To have to entertain a posse of underbred Germans would be *dreadful*."

"The principal relative in a German family is the grandmother, I believe," observed Miss Priscilla, and Mrs. Meredith moaned.

"There are worse relatives than grandmothers," said Mr. Hammond, whereat his cousin sniffed.

"You will all come to dinner to-morrow, of course?" said Mrs. Meredith, as she rose to go. "I never could go through it alone. Come early. They will arrive by the seven o'clock express."

And the Hammonds, accompanied by the maliciously exultant Miss Priscilla, went.

It was settled that the reception should take place with a certain state, in the large drawing-room. The Hammond girls were brimming over with curiosity. Mrs. Meredith, who had outwardly recovered her calmness, sat, in black velvet and old point, staring mournfully into the fire. She looked dignified, but her hands trembled.

Suddenly the noise of arrival was heard. There were cries at the door—quick steps along the hall—then the butler threw open the door, and Ned, looking unusually mischievous, appeared with his bride-elect upon his arm.

"Papa!" cried a fresh young voice, and the petrified Mr. Hammond found himself suddenly in the arms of a slight, graceful girl, whose loving glance was strangely familiar in a face of unfamiliar beauty.

"*Joan!*" cried every voice at once.

"Yes, Joan," said Ned, "wilful Joan, who would go for at least one month into the profession."

"Public applause is our hall-mark. It stamps us for something of worth. I did not dare ask your permission for fear you would not give it. But now that Fraülein Klettermann exists no longer, you will forgive her—won't you?" asked Joan with a smile that was irresistible.

The sound of a door violently slammed awoke everybody to the knowledge of Miss Priscilla's abrupt departure.

When the Hammonds reached home that night their cousin was in bed, and by the time they rose next morning she was on her way to London.

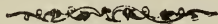
Her behaviour caused much surprise, of course, and she was pursued with conciliatory letters. But no answer to these arrived, nor did the Hammonds ever again see the sight of Miss Priscilla's handwriting.

But her solicitor wrote for her, and his letter was to this effect.

"His client, Miss Priscilla Upton, after consultation with him, had arrived at the reluctant (she begged him to say the *reluctant*) conclusion that, according to the terms of her old promise, Miss Joan Hammond was entitled from her to the sum of £10,000. For Miss Upton had destined this gift from the first to that Hammond who, before the age of thirty, should achieve distinction in one or other branch of art. Miss Upton, from observation and experience, had never expected so glaring a deviation from the traditions and habits of the family; but, having been mistaken, she felt it her mournful duty to warn the remaining Hammonds that at her death the whole of her property would go to the Society for the Preservation of the Ojibeway Indians. Miss Upton's sympathies were entirely with savages, and not at all with any one result of a cultured and effete civilisation."

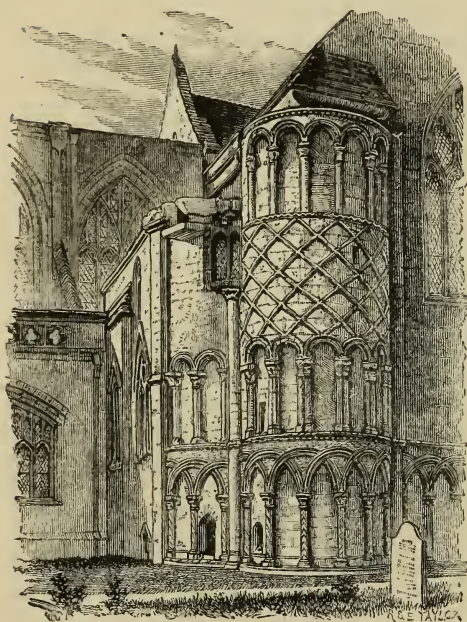
"Four thousand must go to you, papa," said Joan, "and the rest can be divided between Gertrude and Edith—unless Ned objects."

But Ned did not object, being, as Mr. Hammond remarked, the only member of the family, except himself, who had always properly appreciated Joan.



ON THE SOUTH COAST.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



NORMAN TURRET, CHRIST CHURCH.

IT is impossible to approach Bournemouth without being struck by the beauty of its situation. Romantically placed, there is an absence of stiff outlines and premeditated plans about its first impression that is not the least of its charms. Such, at least, will be the opinion of any one coming immediately from the flat country and tame reaches of Salisbury Plain. It is not only as a "city set on an hill," but one also very much hid in a valley. Houses are picturesquely set on the slopes, and around all, and amidst all—alike fringing the heights and clustering in the vales—the pine trees

are scattering perfume upon the air, and adding to the reputation of Bournemouth by their healing virtues.

A short drive lands you at the Bath Hotel, where you are made so welcome, and where your quarters are so comfortable and well appointed, that, once within its portals, you will probably, even if wanderingly inclined, cease to wander.

Bournemouth is surely unlike any other watering-place in England. Individuality, that rare quality, marks it for its own. No matter how minutely it may have been described, you feel that the reality is somewhat different from the anticipation. Almost it resembles a foreign town, with its wooded slopes and detached houses. It is a town that has come to the wood.

Some years ago—I know not how many—Bournemouth was a small, unknown place—hamlet, village, or whatever the settlement might be called. Few people were seen there; trees flourished and had it all their own way, unvisited by man, happy in each other's company, wanting no intrusion, receiving none.

But where will man not penetrate for business, pleasure, or for speculation? So the repose and seclusion of Bournemouth were doomed. The axe laid low many a tree; cruel gaps were made in the pine woods; monsters in the shape of houses began to rear their heads. The pine trees, affrighted, more and more withdrew and shrank out of life. More trees were laid low, more houses appeared.

But land was not especially valuable in the first days, one would think; and so many a house was blessed with quite a large piece of pleasure ground to its own exclusive self, and trees surrounded it with becoming dignity. Very pretty, very proper, but oh! how melancholy.



CHRISTCHURCH.

So it comes to pass that in these days, a handsome and even pretentious looking building stands "within its own grounds," is approached by showy gates that swing to behind you with quite a park-like sound: you walk up an avenue, "well timbered," to an abode that might suit a retired Indian nabob of moderate views, or a dyspeptic alderman in search of ease, and you are surprised to find a small unobtrusive notice in a window announcing "Apartments to Let."

This, of course, has its advantages, not to be lightly esteemed. Who is not sick unto death of the interminable Terraces and Places, Crescents and Squares, of most of our seaside resorts? Do we not know the painful and reiterated experience of those long rows of bricks, whose very similitude to each other depresses one the very moment the agitation and excitement of leaving home and the subsequent journey are over; compelling one to rush back despairingly

to the familiar scenes we have left behind—the barred windows and ghost-haunted rooms and beloved sanctums?

And for what end, aim, or reward? “I suppose you have nothing in the world to do?” remarked a friend last October to a worthy Æsculapius. “Indeed!” he returned. “I am more busy than ever. My patients are all coming back from the sea, and of course they are all coming back ill. It is always so.”

One friend dates his letters from No. 1, Sophronia Terrace, Babington-Super-Mare, and another from No. 99, Alleluia Crescent, Babington-Super-Mud. There is a despondent tone in both these epistles, and the pictures that rise up in the mind’s eye are identically the same and conventionally correct. If we happen to be at home at the time, our hearts go out in compassion to our correspondents; and if we, too, have taken flight in like manner, to compassion we add sympathy. Not only in the sense of error, but in that of suffering also, we are all “miserable sinners.”

All this is very different at Bournemouth. There is a dignity about it and a repose, evidently made to command respect, if not admiration. There is the nucleus of the actual town itself, with its up-and-down-hill streets, whose rows of houses and terraces of shops must have some sort of resemblance to other rows of houses and terraces of shops in other towns. Nothing so much resembles a cat looking in at a window as a cat looking out at a window. But the town is on the lower slopes, hiding its diminished business-head from the aristocratic heights: and Bournemouth proper extends to these heights, and seems to have no bounds—so much are they building round and about, far and near.

The houses are all more or less pretentious (I use the word in its literal, not its unpleasant sense), and probably more or less agreeable to inhabit. And if the names of many displayed on the gates are an index to the interiors, not a few must be very grand and dignified, if not gorgeous and glittering. Some of the names were secular, others religious. In juxtaposition with “Grosvenor” and “Belgravia,” “Heart’s Delight” and “Mount Vernon,” one found “Beersheba” and “Jericho,” “Jerusalem” and “Madagascar”—not that the latter, as far as I am aware, has any religious signification, unless it be as a missionary station. Simply the names; such commonplace appendages as House or Villa were usually omitted; *Cottage* I am sure was unknown.

At length, during a contemplative drive, in which I was unable to disagree with my company for the reason that I had none, I came all at once upon the words “Beelzebub Lodge,” in large capitals upon a swing gate. This was quite too much. Surely here lived the parents of that blessed infant who was brought by them into church one Sunday afternoon to my friend X., and insisted upon his christening the child Beelzebub—and never forgave him for taking the law into his own hands, and giving it the honest name of John. More shocked and

startled than I cared to confess, I hastily bade the coachman drive on, happy in the feeling that for once, at any rate, I was in opposition to the old saying—a saying that, for the sake of polite ears, shall not here find record. After this, I looked out for no more names.

I was on my way to Parkstone, *viâ* Branksome Chine. The road was long and lonely, but too beautiful to be dull. Houses in all directions were being erected, and the pine trees were giving way under the new régime. At length, descending to the left, we skirted a wild though not very deep ravine, where ferns and fronds and wild tangle and bramble bushes grew in enchanting profusion. Water ran below, and a rustic bridge romantically spanned the chasm. Firs clad the slopes and spread over the heights.

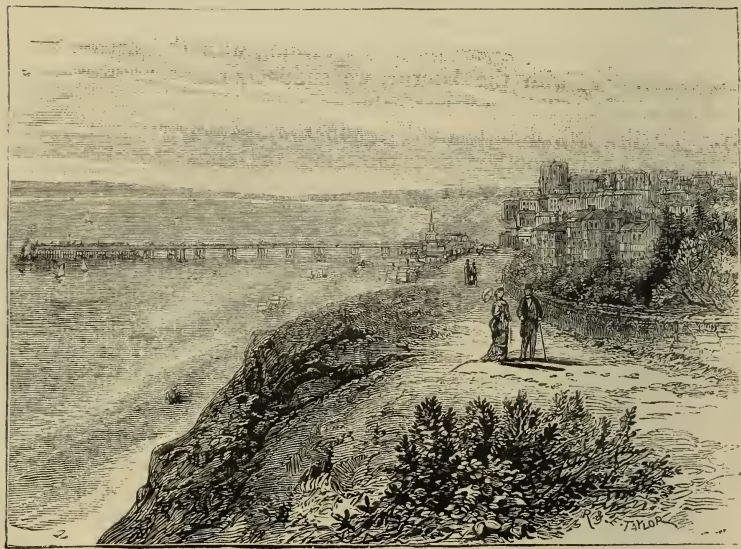
It was a secluded, lovely spot, and turning with the narrow road, and descending with the bourne, we suddenly came upon a grand expanse of sea. To-day it was calm and clear, blue as the laughing sky. To the left, Bournemouth lay in warm, sunny repose: houses rising one above another and crowning the cliffs; so that, as is commonly said, you may in Bournemouth obtain a climate to suit every temperament.

Out on the sea, the cliffs of the Isle of Wight raised their heads in bright, sparkling array. Vessels were passing up and down channel, homeward or outward bound, heavily or lightly freighted, in a sense that finds no record on the register at Lloyd's: moving slowly for want of wind, in spite of sails full set. And as it is an ill-wind that blows no one any good, so it is hard that no one should profit by a calm. In this instance it brought perfection to the day; the perfection of air, sea, and sky. A few white clouds floated above, not dimming the "blue vaulted dome," but varying its surface. The sun, already far on his course, was travelling in splendour, shedding a rich glow upon the moving waters, the ever restless, ever changing sea.

A deserted bathing shed stood in a sheltered nook, and one felt tempted to undress and plunge into those enticing waters. But, after all, it was a late October afternoon, and what looked so fair and warm on the surface, would no doubt in its depths prove cold and unfriendly enough. Moreover, up on the hill, Jehu was waiting in patience my pleasure in returning; in token of which there came wafted on the air murmurs of—not choirs of angels; not the gentle music of far off bells; not the melancholy strains of an *Æolian* harp; not the storm music of winds and waves ruled by *Æolus*—but the voice of one Jehu comparing notes with a fellow labourer (and, doubtless, as their notes agreed, fellow victim), who, in charge of another conveyance, was also waiting the pleasure of a trio of visitors, happily just now invisible.

Why do we resent these intrusions in solitary places from people who are doing the very same thing as ourselves, and have as much right to this fair earth? Why do we feel ourselves tortured, and they

a social scourge, the bane of our existence? Why does dislike immediately run riot within us, so that we hasten onwards with injured feelings that refuse to be comforted? Is it nothing but selfishness and inconsistency? Or is it that somehow or other, as a rule, the people one meets in travelling—the so-called tourists, of whom each unit seems a crowd, and a crowd a vast multitude—are of a genus gifted with small sensibilities and refinements, whose very presence immediately dissolves a spell and breaks a charm, and disturbs future pleasures of memory? We are strange beings, made of a thousand whims and fancies, full of uncertain motions, swayed by a breath of wind. Harps of a thousand strings, and every separate



BOURNEMOUTH.

string vibrating to a separate touch. Yet who shall say that it is not better so?

So I left the trio, and went on my way to Parkstone, to call upon Miss Rosa Mackenzie Kettle, the author of "*The Ranger's Lodge*," "*My Home in the Shires*," and all that series of pleasant and admirable books published by Mr. Weir, of Regent Street. And still, as we went, the plantations of firs were all around, and clearing after clearing had been made, and house after house was being raised to meet the demand. The pines threw out a delicious scent, and one longed to pitch one's tent in a place where the very air seemed possessed of an additional sense. Presently passing through a village, where building was going on just as much as anywhere else, we turned to the left, and entering a lane, appeared to be nearing the confines of civilisation.

To the right were long reaches of shallow water, an island beyond, and behind us might be seen a forest of masts sheltering in Poole harbour. Already the afternoon was waning, and the light of a lowering sun flushed the long flat reaches into something like romance, gilding the island opposite, and checkering our path at intervals with long shadows from the trees. The masts in Poole harbour looked black and still against the sky, glowing red and crimson. Amidst all there was neither sound nor symptom of life; a long melancholy road checkered by melancholy trees. Yet more melancholy when, my visit paid, darkness had quite fallen, and we made the best of our way back by a direct and much nearer route. This is perhaps the prettiest drive about Bournemouth.



“INVALIDS’ WALK,” BOURNEMOUTH.

The sunsets here are remarkable; more beautiful and gorgeous, as it seemed to me, than those usually seen in England: another point in which Bournemouth resembles in some degree a foreign town. They reminded me almost of mild Norwegian skies (the intense sunsets of Norway cannot be expected in lower latitudes), and of the evenings one sees falling over the shores of Southern Europe. I was told that these evenings were not exceptional, but that Bournemouth is noted for its singularly vivid sunsets.

One evening in especial I remember. The white fleecy clouds which are so beautiful, and which so often accompany a N.W. wind, were sailing along overhead, moving with that appalling silence which seems to belong to space, save when the thunder clap awakens the eternal solitudes. The sun sank to the horizon like a molten ball, the white vapours flushed with a crimson glow, and the whole scene

was steeped in warm colouring. Out in the west it seemed that the gates of Paradise had been thrown open, and sent forth a stream of celestial light. How often has not the sight been strained at such moments, as if surely beyond that glory one's vision must obtain a slight revelation of the unseen world—but gazed in vain?

At the bottom of the sloping cliffs the sea rolled in with a calm soothing splash over the smooth sands. In the midst of all this beauty reposed the Isle of Wight, its cliffs for ever enticing one to that wealth of nature they guard so well. The pier stretched out over the water, wide, new, and well built. Here you may pace up and down, and enjoy the beauties of sunrise or sunset, with the restless sea moving and surging around. And walking up and down the pier, you may see, a little way up the hill, a small house built in the Italian style, in which Keble died; so that Bournemouth becomes more or less associated with the author of the "Christian Year."

Often you have the whole pier to yourself. The townspeople are at "the daily task, the common round"; the visitors are most of them too delicate to venture thereon, except when the mid-day sun has dispersed all chilliness from the atmosphere. The "Invalids' Walk," which stretches almost from the Bath Hotel down the valley into the town, is more popular because more sheltered. Here, under the straight, stiff pines, you may pace the paths or occupy the seats, listening to the near ripple of the bourne, which gives its name to the town, or the more distant murmur of the sea, to which the bourne is hastening. If cold winds are blowing, the chances are they will not reach you; for these public gardens are in a depression, almost a ravine, and you feel yourself in a climate unpleasantly relaxing, unless you form one of the many sufferers who make the fortune of Bournemouth.

These invalids add to the melancholy of the place—melancholy in spite of its undoubted beauty. But, after all, people usually go there in search of health, not gaiety: scarcely even pastime. He who does so will be disappointed. With that object in view he must soon migrate to fresh fields and pastures new: and the chances are that in the mild liveliness of Cheltenham or Bath, he may find the small excitements Bournemouth disdains to cultivate.

"I cannot stay here; I shall get hipped if I do," remarked a friend whom I found at the Bath Hotel. We had parted ten years ago in Paris. He had gone his way to the coral strands of India, where I still thought him: until at seven o'clock one evening, we both took our seats at the same small table in the dining-room, and again proved the world less wide than it seems.

The cemetery at Bournemouth is certainly one of the prettiest in all England. It is more like a portion of some private grounds than a graveyard. Looking down the paths, you gaze through a wealth of verdure and sunshine glinting amidst the leaves and singing birds; whilst the marble tombs are so simple, so white and well cared for,

so pure and beautiful, they appear as ornaments, rather than sad records of vanished hands and stilled voices: the very spot one would choose to rest in after the labours of life. But the ground is now sacred to old inhabitants of the place only, for Bournemouth has expanded and space is limited.

The adjoining parish church, as everyone knows, was last year the scene of feuds between clergy and parishioners, bringing not peace but a sword within the town. It is a handsome modern building, richly decorated. On the Sunday evening it was crowded with a large congregation. The centre aisle of the church was in some sort of semi-obscurity, partly designed, partly because the lights, placed behind the pillars, threw their rays only into the side aisles. The chancel was large and brilliantly lighted. The singing was more adapted to a Roman Catholic than a Protestant place of worship. Of the prayers, scarcely a word could be heard or followed. And when the vicar ascended the pulpit, and in sensible tones delivered a sensible address, one could understand that it would be difficult for a substitution of the ceremonial for the spiritual to find favour in his sight.

A not very interesting drive of five miles over a long, straight road, brings you to grand old Christ Church, one of the most ancient buildings in the kingdom, of great beauty and of singular interest. The year in which it was founded is unknown, but the architecture consists of two periods, the Norman and Late Perpendicular. The dignity of the interior is, to a great extent, lost by a thick and general coating of whitewash. The rood screen, of the time of Edward III., also interferes very much with the length view, but is probably too handsome to be done away with.

The exterior is somewhat contradictory in its effect. The north porch is Early English, is unusually large, and has been particularly well restored. But the most quaint portion, and that which gives most character to the building, is the circular Norman turret, which is richly decorated, and in excellent preservation. All this portion seems "hoary with age," and takes you back in the spirit to the days when monks paced these territories and held sway in England.

In the west doorway of the interior is the monument erected to the memory of Shelley. The drowned body of the poet is partly supported by his wife, who bends over it in drooping attitude, expressive of grief. The hull of a boat and fragments of rock and sea weed fill up the scene. Beneath are words taken from his poem of "Adonais":—the verse beginning:

"He hath outsoar'd the shadow of our night,
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain."

Strange life, indeed, was that of Shelley, passion-tossed and broken. That restless longing to make all things sure: to know what in this world is wisely withheld! Unhappy in his life, suddenly cut off by accident or by treachery, his work scarcely begun, he yet lived long

enough to make others unhappy as well as himself; to miss his aim; to leave behind him, as regards himself, a feeling of intense dissatisfaction and regret. But if we cannot judge of the life of an ordinary mortal, far less can we judge of such a man as Shelley. He probably made himself out worse than he really was, as men of a morbid temperament often do; and no doubt his own mental sufferings and experiences—phases “changeable as a poet’s moods”—were quite outside the reach and understanding, perhaps even beyond the knowledge of those by whom he was more intimately surrounded.

Much as the monument has been criticised, it is impossible not to look at it with extreme interest. Standing there and gazing, there is conjured up before the mind the vision of a small vessel on the shores



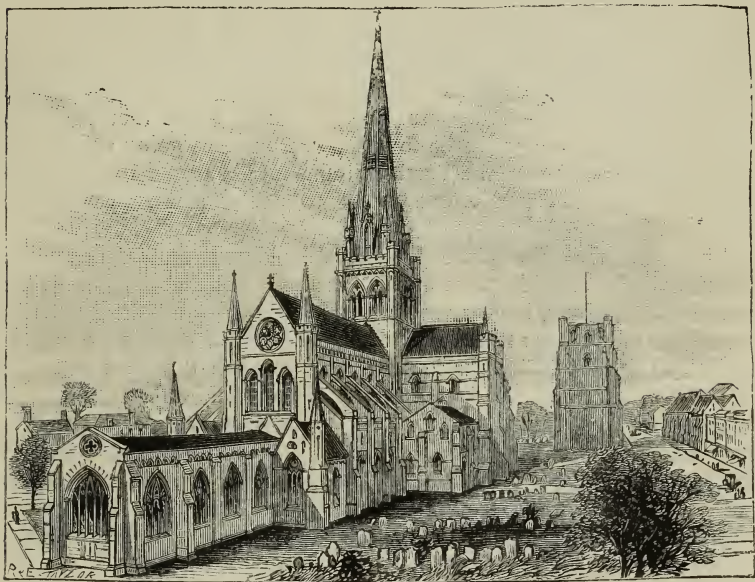
BOGNOR.

of an Italian bay. A glorious morning with calm waters and serene skies—the skies of Italy alone. The poet bids his beloved Mary—his second wife—good-bye, little thinking it is good-bye for ever: steps into his boat, and sails away to meet his friend Hunt. Suddenly, in returning, a storm arises, and Shelley is never more seen in life. The secrets of the unknown world, into which he had so longed to penetrate, were all too soon disclosed to him. What were his thoughts and emotions in that last supreme moment, when, as we are told, one’s whole past frequently rises up in an instant of time? What the reawaking of the next instant, when time and change were ended? Alas, poor Shelley! Unhappy in this world, let us hope for the best in regard to that to which his summons came so early.

Leaving the church, you look over into the meadows through which the river runs so calmly—a contrast to the life we have just touched upon. The scene is fair, and quiet with the quiet of

centuries. This grand building has grown old and gray upon its banks ; dynasties and religions have passed away ; generations have come and gone ; but, youthful and vigorous as ever, the river still flows onward to the sea.

You turn from it all, and wend your way back to Bournemouth, leaving the little town of Christchurch behind, and once more approach the pine groves and fir-clad heights, and pretentious, secluded villas, where everything looks so proper and so respectable, so depressing and so melancholy.



CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal to be said in favour of Bournemouth : its individuality, and small resemblance to any other place ; the absence of Sophronia Terraces, and Alleluia Crescents ; in that its sands do not become the bear garden of the ordinary sea-side resort, devoted to negro minstrels, and wandering photographers, and all that army of nursemaids and children—juveniles that surely were invented for the everlasting plague and punishment of man. It has many interesting spots in its neighbourhood. The cliffs of the beautiful Isle of Wight are ever a point of interest before you, stretching across the blue waters of the Channel. And the sunsets, I have said, often magnificently crown the day.

From Bournemouth to Bognor, as the crow flies, is a comparatively short distance, but as the train takes you it is miserably prolonged. I left Bournemouth one morning at eleven o'clock, and reached my

destination not until past five. Everyone surely needs some special object to take him to Bognor, and mine was to spend a few days with friends who were staying there. The place should be called Bognor-in-the-Marshes, and I failed to find in it many points of interest or recommendation.

To begin with, that first evening the elements were all warring together in fierce conflict: the wind and the rain, the sea and the darkness. Such a storm has not often visited our coast. In returning to the hotel at night from my friends' house (it was the first time they had visited the place, and they declared it should be the last), it was almost impossible to fight against the wind and the rain. Not a creature was visible; the place might have been given up to the dead. Either there were no lamps, or they had been blown out by the gale, and the darkness might be felt. The water within a hundred yards surrounding the Norfolk Hotel was a foot high; in the darkness no path could be found, so that I kept going round and round and returning to the starting point, until I began to think the witches themselves had a good deal to do with the fury of the elements.

The next day the place looked dilapidated and dreary—the dreariness of a sea-side place out of season. Not that Bognor, as far as I could discover, is ever very much in season—and this, perhaps, forms one of its few attractions: the possibility of escaping a crowd. Added to this, it looked driven and tempest-tossed, washed out. It is a direct contrast to Bournemouth, being flat, unprotected, and almost on a level with the sea. This, so far—its level beach—makes it a favourable resort for children. It has a narrow, old-fashioned pier, with wide gaps between the boards, which are so many traps for canes and umbrellas, and have doubtless wrenched off many a lady's high-heeled shoe (so fashionable and so ugly), to be devoured by the hungry sea beneath.

The sea itself was pleasant at Bognor, because it is pleasant everywhere: but it is especially so when it comes dashing in almost to your very feet, so that at high water you may almost jump from the esplanade into the advancing waves. It rolls up over the pebbly beach with a drowsy, soothing, monotonous lull. Strange that there should be so great a sense of rest, such a power of calming, in that most restless thing, the ocean! The air of Bognor seemed pleasant also, at this season, but in summer must be relaxing; though it appears paradoxical that any sea-side place should be otherwise than healthy and bracing.

"Horrid place!" said N. B., as we patrolled the esplanade like sentinels unattached, while the sea plashed beside us and seemed to set her words to music; and the smallest and daintiest of feet, clad in the daintiest of shoes, and scarlet silken hose that set off a perfect instep and ancles à merveille, beat time to the waves. "Horrid place!" she repeated with increasing emphasis. "You see we made

the mistake of taking the house before seeing the place. I cannot think how we can have been so stupid !”

And dear, gentle A.—who is able to see the world and all the beauties of nature only with others’ eyes—walked between us and laughed at N. B.’s energetic paroxysms ; and occasionally stopped to listen to the fairy patterings of her fairy dog Mimie ; and every now and then fell a-musing, in contemplation of her paper on Madame de Staël : the result of which musing was placed before the reader in the January number of *The Argosy*.

And certainly, listening to N. B.’s well-directed criticisms, I felt myself fortunate in having had an object in coming to Bognor apart from the place itself. One can hardly wonder that it has stood still, and that a century ago it might have looked very much as it looks to-day ; though in these days of progress it would be rash to prophesy its aspect a century hence.

But we had at least one pleasant drive, which must be recorded, because it is perhaps the most picturesque drive about Bognor.

Passing out by South Bersted Church, and crossing the South Coast rail at Woodgate, we presently came out by the Arundel and Chichester road, passed the great iron gates of Slindon House, with its splendid beeches, and swept over the bare, cold expanse of Slindon Common. Here at the top of the rising ground we obtained a fine view of the distant sea, but hardly pausing in our journey we gradually got up a long, rising hill to the Fair Mile, where on either side we found glorious trees rich with autumn tints, whose long glades and avenues, into which sight could just penetrate as we swept along, reminded one of splendours of the New Forest. If Bognor itself had no attractions, as little could not be said of some portions of its neighbourhood. But we were now far from Bognor, and in a distance, say of ten miles, the ugliest place has space wherein to turn to paradise. And, though Bognor is not beautiful, it is by no means the least favoured spot in the world. There are Essex marshes, for instance, and Norfolk downs, and many other places that certainly would win the prize for gloom and uninterestingness before Bognor.

Passing along the Fair Mile, and revelling in the trees, and then coming up with the Whiteways Lodge, imposing from its castellated appearance, we came to four cross roads, and, happily, a sign post. We came to more—a blast of the most cruel, cold, cutting east wind, which swept over us with a force that made our very teeth chatter, and the very horses tremble ; whilst Mimie crept out of sight in A.’s arms, and N. B. drew tightly round her form a shawl of many colours.

We were now on the brow of a steep hill, and down below—far and wide—reposed a pastoral valley. A glorious view it must be in summer, but to-day drowned and steeped in deep flood, field after field obliterated in water. Taking the northern of the four roads, we gradually made way down Bury hill, thankful that each step took us

more and more within shelter of the high hedges, more and more out of the power of the cutting wind; until presently we found our destination at Bury Vicarage. A quiet, country spot, with a small, interesting church, where the even tenour of one's life might flow on from year to year, so that insensibly, unwittingly, one might pass through the seven stages of man, and never know where one stage ended, the next began; undisturbed, unfretted by the rush and roar of that world of business and pleasure that is not so very far off.

Some hours later we were on the road again, returning by the way we came, able to rejoice in much that is picturesque between Bury and Bognor. Making the most of the beauties of nature through which we were passing; knowing that our journey's end would land us in a country not flowing with milk and honey, where the grapes of Eschol do not grow.

The next day a short journey by rail took us to the quaint old town of Chichester. There appears to be very little about it that is interesting, beyond the cathedral. The city is built on the site of the old Roman Regnum, whose ruins lie beneath: mosaics and many Roman remains have been discovered, and many more doubtless lie buried. Regnum is interesting from its appearing to answer to the Claudia and Pudens of St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy.

The cathedral, though one of the minor ones of England, has many interesting points about it. It was completed about the year 1125, and some portions have preserved a look of great antiquity. The spire fell in 1861, and was rebuilt in 1865. The cathedral is a mixture of Norman and Early English. The nave and choir are Norman. Next to York, Chichester is the broadest cathedral in England, and is the only cathedral possessing five aisles, which make some of the transverse views of the interior imposing. The nave is enriched by several Flaxman monuments, besides a monument to the unhappy poet Collins. The choir, long and narrow, has been refitted, and possesses few points of interest.

The cloisters are Perpendicular, and fine, but all cloisters resemble each other more or less. The bell tower, or campanile, on the north side, is Perpendicular, and of the fifteenth century, and stands out in excellent and imposing contrast with the cathedral. No other cathedral in England possesses a detached belfry, though it is a feature frequently met with abroad.

We were unable to stay for service that afternoon, which had been made later than usual on account of a convocation of clergy, that was being held at the palace. On reaching the station we found the members of convocation on the platform en masse; and when the train came up they scrambled into the carriages and battled for places, and left any lady who might be there to look out for herself. But I found room for *my* ladies in a compartment reserved to a newly married couple (it was my fate to fall in with newly married couples), who fell in love with N. B. and A. (and

no wonder!), took compassion upon us, gave us a place, and made themselves as agreeable as their conscious position would allow. I caught sight of an earl's coronet upon a small bag as we got out of the carriage, and a few days afterwards discovered who our polite fellow travellers had been.

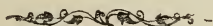
Returning from Chichester, even the dull, deadly-lively thoroughfares of Bognor had in them something almost pleasant; and at any rate there was the ever-moving, ever-changing sea for companionship. The dulllest place in the world could never be dull if it bordered the sea.

My regret at leaving Bognor had nothing to do with the place itself. But it must be remembered that it was emphatically the "dead season;" and at such times there is a certain air of stagnation about the liveliest place, which never fails to depress. The lodging-house keepers have reaped their harvest and retired into their shells; large windows, dirty and disrobed, stare you in the face with stony, unchanging aspect. Grass begins to grow in the streets, and few footsteps interfere with its progress. The little pleasure boats are all drawn up on the beach, high and dry for the winter; and if, on seeing an old boatman lounging about, he asks if you would like a sail, he does it unconsciously, by the force of habit: just as a clock mechanically strikes the appointed hours through the night watches, though none are near to listen.

So I left Bognor. Winding about the South Coast, passing such lovely spots as Arundel, such quiet places as Worthing, such gay scenes as Brighton, I found myself in due time at St. Leonard's, that most agreeable, most picturesque of watering-places.

In the Alexandra Hotel, so pleasant an abiding place both in situation and management—where you receive rather the comforts of a home than the routine of an hotel—I found quietude and consolation for the dulness of Bognor. The elements, too, were at rest: fair skies and soft winds for the moment were the order of the day: and all the little world of St. Leonard's congregated every afternoon on the walk in front of the sea, for the pleasure of that eternal pacing to-and-fro of which people seem never to grow weary—doubtless because it is done of their own free will.

If the penance of Sisyphus became a fashionable amusement it would soon become as popular as lawn tennis: and, perhaps, would be as sensible a pastime as tobogganning down stairs on a tea-tray.



TWO DREAMS.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

[Date, August 4th, 1864.]

“IF you please, sir, Simmons wishes to speak to you.”

“By all means,” replied Colonel Holt, apparently surprised that Simmons should make the request through the medium of the footman. “Tell him to come here at once.”

A few moments later came a hesitating knock, and it was not until Colonel Holt had twice shouted “Come in,” that the door opened to admit the aforesaid Simmons.

Looking up somewhat impatiently, Colonel Holt was struck by the change in the man’s demeanour. No longer the spruce, erect, middle-aged butler, but a pallid, trembling man, stood before him.

“Good heavens! Are you ill, Simmons?”

“No, sir, but I must go away this very day. You *must* let me go; indeed you must, sir.”

“Certainly, if you wish it; but give me some reason for this sudden determination. What has happened?”

“I can tell you nothing, sir. Let me go without question, that is all I ask of you.”

“It is a great deal to ask,” said Colonel Holt, more and more surprised; “and I am not sure that I can grant so much. Come, Simmons, tell me honestly what has happened. If I can help you ——”

“Thank you, sir, you can only let me go.”

“Perhaps you are in some money trouble? Speak out frankly if you are.” A faint flush came upon the man’s face; he hesitated.

“Money, sir, has to do with my trouble,” he replied, “but it is not my reason for wishing to go away. Have pity on me, I implore you; let me go. I *must*, whether you consent or not.” And a look of the utmost misery crossed the man’s face.

“Well, well,” said his easy-going master, “how long do you want to be away? for a time only, or do you want to leave altogether?”

“If you are kind enough to let me return, sir, I can do so safely by the twentieth of this month.”

“Safely,” muttered Colonel Holt; “what does the fellow mean.” Then aloud: “And who is to fill your place; you know we have visitors coming to-day, and ——”

Again that haggard look of terror came into Simmons’s face as he ventured to interrupt his master.

“Yes, sir, I have thought of that, and I have a brother staying in the village who is butler to Sir Henry Curtis, at Beauchamp Park. The family are abroad, and he has a month’s holiday, and will gladly

take my place while I am absent. I am sure he will do his best to please you, sir."

There being nothing further to settle, his master dismissed Simmons. For a few minutes Colonel Holt pondered over the matter and the man's strange manner, then muttering something to the effect that servants' ways were past finding out, he dismissed the subject from his thoughts and became engrossed in business letters of importance.

At luncheon, much to Mrs. Holt's amazement, a strange servant was in attendance. "Where is Simmons?" she asked.

"Oh," exclaimed Colonel Holt, suddenly remembering he had not enlightened his wife, "this is Simmons's brother, who has taken his place for a week or two. I have been so busy I forgot to tell you."

Mrs. Holt asked no further questions till the man had left the room. Then she said: "My dear, when you allowed Simmons to leave, did you remember that Mrs. Perceval and Effie were coming to-day, and that we have a dinner-party to-morrow?"

"Yes, I did not forget, but the man would go. I could get nothing out of the fellow, except that he must go this very day, and would return by the twentieth."

"But what reason did he give for such extraordinary conduct?"

"None whatever. He looked miserably ill and changed, as pale as a ghost. I never saw such a scared object in my life."

"Do you think he had been drinking?"

"Oh no, he was as sober as a judge. Never mind, his brother will do very well, no doubt; he's butler at Beauchamp, and looks a decent sort of fellow. By-the-by, what time is the carriage to be at the station to meet the Percevals?"

Before Mrs. Holt could reply, Simmons No. 2 appeared, bearing a telegram.

"This has just arrived, madam."

"A telegram! Some change of plans, I suppose, on the part of the Percevals," said Mrs. Holt, opening the envelope quickly. "Oh, how tiresome! Listen: 'So sorry we cannot come. Effie has one of her nervous attacks. Will write all particulars.'"

"Well, that's no end of a bore. Plague take these girls with their nervous attacks! Here we've the nuisance of a dinner-party of natives to-morrow all to no purpose."

"They must have been asked some time or other, my dear," said Mrs. Holt, mildly; "but it's very provoking, I own."

"And so Miss Effie and her wonderful diamonds are not forthcoming," said her husband, getting up and lighting a cigar. "Well, I'm off. I think I'll take the dog-cart and drive to the station. No doubt there will be fish and other things to be fetched." And Colonel Holt sauntered out.

On his return, to his great surprise, Simmons himself met him at the hall door. "*You* back again! What does this mean?"

The man looked confused, stammering out, "I—I—thought

better of it, sir, and—and—I hope you will forget what has passed.”

“You are determined to puzzle me to-day, Simmons. Do you think you are quite right in your head? Have you no explanation to give of your strange conduct?”

“None, sir,” was the answer, in low tones.

“Now, what on earth would be the proper thing to do, I wonder?” thought Colonel Holt. “Oh, if I didn’t hate trouble so much, and the weather were not so hot! As it is, ‘masterly inactivity’ must gain the day.” And without another look at the delinquent, he made the best of his way up stairs.

[Date, August 4th, 1864.]

“What can make Effie so late this very morning of all others, when there is so much to be done before we start,” sighed Mrs. Perceval, pushing back her chair from the breakfast-table as she spoke, and addressing no one in particular.

“What was the row with Effie in the night, mother?” asked James, a boy of fourteen, who at the moment was conveying a large piece of bread and jam to his mouth.

“With Effie?” asked his mother. “What *do* you mean, Jem?”

“All I know is, I heard a scream in the night,” replied Jem; “and imagined it came from Effie’s room opposite. But I was awfully sleepy, and the next moment I was off again, and forgot all about it till just now.”

Mrs. Perceval hastened up to her daughter’s room. To her great dismay, Effie was sitting on the edge of the bed in a half fainting condition, only partly dressed.

“My darling, are you ill? What is it?” asked her mother.

“Oh, mother, mother,” moaned the girl, clinging to her, “don’t go away, don’t leave me,” was all poor Effie could say.

“Leave you, my child; of course not. But why didn’t you send for me. I had no idea you were ill.”

“I did not want to frighten you, and so I tried to get up and dress, and then this horrible faintness came over me, and I could not get to the bell. Oh, mamma, I have had such a terrible night!”

“My darling! Then it *was* you Jem heard scream?”

“He must have heard me, but he didn’t come, no one came; and oh, it was so terrible. I shall never, never forget it,” and she trembled like an aspen leaf.

“One thing is clear,” said Mrs. Perceval, “we cannot go to the Holts to-day.”

“No, no,” said Effie, “I can go on no visits; but I must get away from here, from this room, from this bed,” she added, with a shudder.

“We will go anywhere you like, darling,” said her mother, soothingly. “Only try to be calm now, and tell me what has upset you so dreadfully.”

It was some time before the girl was sufficiently collected to satisfy her mother's anxiety and curiosity, but at length, with many breaks and halting sentences, she spoke much as follows :

"I went to bed, as you know, perfectly well and looking forward to our visit to the Holts, and I soon fell asleep. About one o'clock I fancy it must have been, I awoke with a feeling of the most frightful depression, just as if I were doomed to death. I tried to call out, and to sit up in bed, but a heavy weight seemed on me, and I could only lie still and gasp. Then I felt myself sinking into a sort of stupor. I knew I was not awake, and yet I was not asleep. Fearful shapes and forms flitted before my eyes, until at length they seemed to merge into the form of a man, with huge prominent eyes, who stooped over me, and slowly waved a large knife in front of my face. I tried to scream, but felt it was only inwardly, and that no sound escaped my lips. Again this terrible form bent over me, gradually fading away, only to return a third time with a still fiercer look in his eyes. Making a superhuman effort, my voice at last broke its bounds, and with a ringing scream I woke, and sprang out of bed. There was no one to be seen, my door was still locked ; no one could have come in ; it must then have been a dream I thought, and, at last, shivering and shaking, I crept into bed again, but could not go to sleep. Oh, I did so long for you, mother, and yet I was too frightened to come to you."

"My poor child !" cried Mrs. Perceval, soothingly. "It was indeed a dreadful dream."

"But, was it only a dream ?" sighed Effie ; "it seemed so much more—and that face, shall I ever forget it ?"

"Only a dream, darling. Something had upset your nerves. Now, try and shake off the remembrance of it. Come down stairs, and, after breakfast, we will settle where we will go. I think the sea-side will be best, but you shall decide."

Mrs. Perceval treated the matter lightly ; Effie always had been highly nervous, and this was only a bad attack of nightmare. It was, however, some time before the girl took the same view as her mother ; and, although the change to the sea-side braced her nerves, and did her very much good, it was far from being a complete cure. At times, the remembrance of the face she had seen would return and cause her hours of torture. Mrs. Perceval, like a wise woman, had kept her own counsel concerning the dream, or vision, whichever it was, so that it had not become an eight-day wonder in the household. She rarely allowed Effie to dwell upon it to her, and when, a year later, a new interest sprang up in the girl's life, she rejoiced, feeling sure the ghost would now be laid for ever. For Effie was engaged to be married, and two honest brown eyes now haunted her waking as well as her sleeping moments, and a sense of peace and security hedged her round. To Launce Spencer she had of course told the tale, and Launce had petted and soothed her, and made nothing of it ; and

with her hand in his, and her head on his shoulder, she could feel no fear.

It was once more the beginning of August, when, one bright morning, Launce unexpectedly received a summons to join his regiment; a court-martial, or some duty equally important, required his presence. Poor Effie wandered about the house like an unquiet spirit after his departure. At length, a bright thought struck her.

"Mother, this would be the very time for my visit to the Holts. Let me send a telegram to say I will arrive to-morrow. They have always begged me to come at a moment's notice, and I may not be able to go later on."

"But they have people staying with them," objected Mrs. Perceval.

"Never mind; they will put me up somehow. Do let me go."

"Very well, dear," agreed her mother, rather reluctantly; to oppose any wish of Effie's was an impossibility to her. "You must take Susan with you."

"Oh, yes; and my diamonds," laughed Effie. "Do you remember I was to have taken them last year to show Mrs. Holt. She was so envious at my good luck in having them left to me; 'a chit like you,' I remember she said."

Mrs. Perceval rejoiced to find that all remembrance of the shock her daughter had sustained a year ago seemed blotted out of her mind. No painful thoughts appeared to linger of that interrupted visit to the Priory.

"Well, Effie, send off your telegram, then; but you need not say your diamonds will accompany you," she added, laughing.

Effie flew up to the little village post-office, and dashed off the following message:—

"I am coming to-morrow for a few days, unless you telegraph back to the contrary."

In the evening Mrs. Perceval inquired if she had received an answer.

"Oh, no; I told them not to answer unless they could not have me."

"Still I wonder you have not heard," returned her mother; but Effie was quite sure it was all right, so no more was said.

Next morning she was up early, putting the finishing strokes to her packing, laughing and singing, apparently in the highest spirits. "Good-bye, darling mother. I shall write to you to-morrow. Isn't it odd? it was this very day, August fourth, that we were to have gone to the Holts last year." Still no painful reminiscences on the subject. Her mother kissed and blessed her, preached care and caution, and so they parted.

On arriving at X—— station, Effie was somewhat surprised to find that no vehicle awaited her from the Priory; however, as she was able to procure a fly without any difficulty, the omission was of

little consequence. It so happened she had never visited the Holts before, great friends though they were. They had met abroad and at the houses of common friends, but something had always come in the way of a visit to the Priory, and Effie could scarcely believe she was really on her way thither. As the fly drove up to the door of the old house, she saw Mrs. Holt in the garden, and, putting out her head, nodded and smiled gaily. Up ran her hostess, exclaiming, "Effie, my dear child, what a delightful surprise! Why didn't you let us know you were coming."

"Surely you received my telegram yesterday?"

"No; did you send one? Oh, that dreadful boy at the post-office! He really must be got rid of. This is the third telegram he has lost in a month—careless, good-for-nothing young rascal! Never mind about that now, however. How delightful to think you really are here at last."

"But is it convenient? Are you sure you can put me up?" asked Effie.

"Oh, I forgot! every room is full," cried her friend, stopping short in dismay as she was hurrying her into the house. "But I can manage; you won't mind. Oh, yes, I know; that will do nicely. There's Fred; he *will* be surprised! Do you know who this is?" she called out to her husband, who was coming down stairs.

"Effie Perceval! Can I believe my eyes?"

"Yes; and she telegraphed yesterday to say she was coming, and that horrible boy must have lost the message. Fred, you *must* have him sent away."

While Effie was lunching, Colonel Holt ran over the names of those who were staying in the house, and of those of the neighbours who were coming to dinner.

"I hope you have brought a smart dress, young lady, and all your diamonds, for there is to be a perfect invasion of natives."

"Oh, I think I shall do," laughed Effie, "though I was not prepared for such a festivity."

"They don't happen often, thank goodness; why, now I think of it, you left us in the lurch on the last grand occasion; this very day, last year, by Jove, so it was."

"Yes. Oh, we won't talk of that," said Effie, shuddering and turning pale. She was relieved by the entrance of Mrs. Holt, who offered to take her to her room.

"I have done the best I can, dear: ordered my den to be turned into a bed-room for you. There was literally no other room available. There is only one drawback: it is at the end of a long passage, has no lock to the door, and is not very near any other room."

"It will do beautifully, I am sure," cried Effie, vexed at the trouble she was giving, and feeling she could not in reason make any objections, though the idea of an isolated room did not strike her pleasantly.

"That is my husband's dressing-room," said Mrs. Holt as they passed an open door. "Now turn to the right, and at the end of this passage is your room. I chose it for my den on account of its inaccessibility."

When reached, it looked such a cheerful, bright little room, with the afternoon sun streaming into it, that Effie was charmed. "If I feel lonely, I can keep Susan with me," she thought.

"Now I shall leave you to rest," said Mrs. Holt. "If you could get a little nap before dinner, you would be all the better for it."

"I must write to mamma and Launce, that will be better than sleeping, and will refresh me quite as much. What time do you dine? 7.30? Very well; good-bye till then."

"I really believe Simmons is wrong in his head," said Colonel Holt to his wife as he came into her room half an hour before dinner.

"What has he done now, then?"

"The fellow's manner is so odd I can't understand him. As soon as you had taken Effie up to her room I sent for him to say an extra place must be laid at the dinner-table, and stated the reason. He didn't make any answer, and looking up I saw he was white as death and shaking all over; then he began a stammering request to be allowed to go away, he was not well, and so on. However, I cut him short, and told him if he wanted to go he must wait till to-morrow, and that then, if go he would, it must be for good; but that, of course, he must stop and do his work to-night. With that I left him, and just now I saw him at work in the dining-room, so I suppose he has recovered his senses."

"How very strange his conduct is," said Mrs. Holt; "it is exactly a year ago to-day since his last vagary."

Contrary to her wont, Mrs. Holt felt somewhat of an anxious hostess as she greeted her guests that evening, but she was reassured by Simmons's manner, which was as composed as usual. Effie, obeying her natural instincts, was late, and reaching the drawing-room after dinner had been announced, fell to the lot of a shy, red-haired youth, who took her in in solemn silence, apparently abashed by the radiance of her diamonds. It was a pleasant, sociable dinner enough, and all went well, to Mrs. Holt's secret relief. She gave a sigh of satisfaction on reaching the drawing-room, feeling now that all danger was over. Never had Effie been brighter or merrier. As soon as the men came up Mrs. Holt persuaded her to sing. She had a lovely voice, but was usually too shy and nervous to perform before strangers. However, to-night she seemed a different creature, and not a little to her own surprise felt every inclination to comply with the request. Everyone was enchanted, and she was besieged for another song.

"You must have some coffee first," said Colonel Holt, beckoning to Simmons to bring it.

"I am better without coffee," said Effie, looking up to decline it, when her eyes suddenly met those of Simmons, who was holding the

tray in front of her. A violent fit of shivering took possession of her as with fixed eyes she watched him leave the room ; then, with a piercing scream, she started up, and, catching hold of Colonel Holt's arm, cried, "Save me, save me !" and fell back fainting into his arms. The usual confusion consequent on such an event ensued. "She must have air and quiet," said Colonel Holt ; and begging his wife would summon Susan, he carried the girl out of the room into his study, where in time she recovered. "Oh ! that face, the awful face of my dream !" she moaned, pressing her hands to her head.

"My dear child, what has distressed you ? Tell me what has made you ill," asked Colonel Holt. His wife had by this time returned to the drawing-room, leaving her husband and Susan with Effie.

"Those dreadful eyes, that face," was all she would say for some time.

"Do you know what she means ?" Colonel Holt asked Susan, who shook her head, and, in a whisper, expressed a hurried opinion that Miss Effie's nerves were often like this, and that most likely she meant nothing.

"Perhaps she will tell me if we are alone," thought Colonel Holt, and he made a sign to Susan to leave the room.

"Now, dear, try and tell me what has frightened you ; and who it is has such dreadful eyes ; or would you rather tell Agnes ? If so, I will fetch her."

"No, no," said Effie, clinging to him ; "I will tell you ; it will be better ; but it makes me shudder so to speak of it." Colonel Holt soothed her as best he could, and at length she managed to tell him of her dream of a year ago. "And oh !" she cried, "that man who brought the coffee to me had the same face as the man in my dream, and when I looked up his dreadful eyes were looking at me in the same murderous way as in my dream."

"That man ? Do you mean Simmons, my butler ?" asked Colonel Holt, laughing, trying to reassure her. "Fancy turning old Simmons into a villain of romance ! Why, he has been with me for years, and is as steady as old Time. You are tired and over-excited this evening, Effie, and your imagination has run away with you. That is all, believe me."

He rang the bell and summoned Susan, who persuaded Effie to go to her room. Colonel Holt then returned to the drawing-room. His guests were departing, and very soon he and his wife were left to themselves.

"I must go to that poor child," said Mrs. Holt. "What could have brought on such an attack ?"

"Oh, some nonsense about a dream. I wouldn't tease her with questions to-night. Give her a soothing draught, and let her go to bed ; and ask her maid to sit with her till she falls asleep."

Left alone, Colonel Holt rang the bell, desired Simmons to put out

the lights and see that all was safe, and then betook himself, with many yawns, to his dressing-room, where he intended to solace himself with a pipe before going to bed ; and, for want of better food for thought, his mind reverted to poor little Effie's hysterical tale of her dream. "Pish—nonsense—rubbish !" he muttered between whiffs, when suddenly an unpleasant thought struck him, and he started to his feet. "By Jove ! what if there should be something in it. The man's manner is not satisfactory ; and it is odd, to say the least of it, that the very day she was to have come last year, and the very day she has come this year, he should have behaved so queerly. Well, I suppose I'm an old fool, but I won't go to bed till dawn at any rate. What is the time now ? twelve o'clock. If anything is to happen it will happen soon, I suppose."

He opened the door softly. The house seemed wrapped in complete silence. Not a sound was to be heard. Leaving the door ajar, he placed his arm-chair behind it, put out the candles, and re-seated himself, devoutly hoping he might not fall asleep, but thinking it was more than likely he should do so. When the stable clock chimed the half-hour after midnight Colonel Holt started, and changed his position. Surely he had begun to doze ; this would never do. Why on earth had he given himself so much discomfort ? He, who would willingly go to bed at ten o'clock every night, to sit up in the dark to such an unearthly hour, just because an hysterical, love-sick girl ——

At this point of his meditations sleep again overpowered him ; and one o'clock chimed unheeded ; and a figure crept by the open door unheard, and stole softly down the corridor towards poor little Effie's room. A moment later, and Colonel Holt is wide awake, as scream after scream breaks the silence of the night. Before he can reach the room at the end of the corridor, the door is flung open wildly, a stream of light bursts forth, and a little white-robed figure with bare feet flies towards him. To his horror, he sees blood on her face and arms. "Help, help !" she cries ; "he will kill Susan !"

"Go to Agnes," was all he had time to say, hurrying past as Susan's cries grew fainter and fainter. Rushing into the room, he threw himself upon Simmons, with whom the poor woman was struggling bravely, having contrived, though not without injury, to wrest from his grasp a knife, with which he had threatened Effie's life. It was Susan's blood that had stained the child's face and hands.

Evidently Colonel Holt had not arrived a moment too soon on the scene. He caught the murderous gleam in the wretched man's eyes, and shuddered at what might have happened had he altogether disregarded poor Effie's story.

"You villain, you ——," he began ; but the words died away on his lips as the poor creature, struggling violently in his grasp, uttered a piercing scream, and fell back—dead !

MRS. HOLT TO MRS. PERCEVAL.

"The Priory, August 10th.

"MY DEAR MRS. PERCEVAL,—We were much relieved to hear of Effie's safe arrival, and trust that under your care her nerves may before long recover from the dreadful shock they have sustained. We are very glad poor Susan's wounds are healing so quickly. It has, indeed, been a fearful tragedy, and both Fred and I are quite unstrung by it all. I, for one, shall never refuse to believe in dreams again. But that reminds me I have yet to tell you the strangest part of the story.

"The brother of the poor wretched man came to see my husband a day or two ago. He was naturally in the deepest distress, for a great affection had existed between him and his brother. He told us that about eighteen months ago, ever since a visit we had paid to Lord D——, where he had gone with us, his brother had taken to betting and gambling, and going out at night to play cards at a public house there is in the village. The result of all this was that he lost every penny of his savings, and ran deeply into debt. He was engaged to a very foolish, vain woman, who only cared for him for what he could give her, and did nothing but abuse and reproach him when no more money was forthcoming, and altogether made his life a burden to him.

"About this time he heard us at dinner and at other times talking of Effie's diamonds, and of how she was coming on a visit, and was to bring them with her. He had confided his many troubles to his brother, who happened to have a month's holiday and had taken lodgings in the village, and his brother lent him money enough to clear him. The fatal love of play, however, still clung to him, and now comes the strange part of my tale.

"The night of the third of August last year he had a terrible dream. Having promised his brother to keep from play, he had gone to bed early, instead of going out as he had been in the habit of doing. But he could not sleep, and tossed from side to side, his mind filled with visions of Effie's diamonds, which had again been the subject of conversation at dinner. About dawn he fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that you and Effie had arrived, and that she had come down to dinner resplendent with diamonds, the sight of which, to use his own words, raised the devil within him. The passion for gambling seized on him with renewed force, and he at once determined to steal the diamonds and make off to America. He felt he would not even stop short of murder itself in order to accomplish his desire. In his dream he waited at table and performed all his duties as quietly and as perfectly as ever, but his resolution did not waver. The house was shut up for the night, and he found himself in the pantry searching among the knives for the one which he considered best suited to his purpose. Armed with it, he stole up to Effie's room about two o'clock in the morning. Entering very softly, he stood for a moment

listening to her quiet, even breathing, which showed she was fast asleep. A night-light was burning, and he could see the glitter of the diamond ornaments, as they lay scattered about the dressing-table.

"He moved forward to secure them, and, in so doing, made some slight noise which awoke the poor child, and with a piercing scream she started up in bed. Then, so he dreamed, he pushed her down, and threatened to murder her if she were not quiet.

"At this point of his dream Simmons awoke, trembling and shaking as if he had the ague, and for some time he felt, so he told his brother, as if he had really committed the fearful deed, so vivid was the impression left upon his mind. He had the sense to regard his dream in the light of a warning, and at once felt that his sole safety lay in flight. His brother took the same view, and soon after breakfast Simmons went to my husband and told him he wished to go away for a few days, assigning no reason. Of course we thought his conduct very strange, but he went, and his brother was to take his place in his absence. On hearing, however, that you and Effie had postponed your visit he reappeared in the afternoon.

"His dream, combined with his brother's entreaties, had so worked upon his better feelings that for a long time he gave up his evil practices. A month or two ago, however, it appears he again succumbed to temptation, and had again lost (for him) a large sum of money.

"On the fourth of August occurred Effie's unexpected and ill-fated visit. It is easy now to understand Simmons's behaviour when he heard of her arrival. No doubt the memory of his terrible dream rushed back on his mind, and his dread was lest the temptation should overpower him, as alas! it did. His poor brother wishes vainly that he had been here, for then he says the devil would not have had it all his own way with him. Of course Simmons did not imagine that Effie's fainting fit had any connection with himself, neither had he any reason to suppose that Susan would sit up with her that night. But even had he known it I doubt if the fact would have made any difference, for a stronger influence than he could resist was upon him and drove him to his destruction. Heart disease, which his brother says is in the family, must have been the cause of his awfully sudden death.

"Whether it will be well to tell Effie the sequel of this sad and strange story you must decide. At any rate, it seems inadvisable to reopen the subject at present. There are those who no doubt would pretend they could account for all that is so strange in these two dreams. For myself they must ever remain a psychological riddle—one of those mysteries which pertain to the unseen world.

"With everything that is kind to the dear child,

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

"AGNES HOLT."

MRS. BARBAULD.

DURING the closing decades of the last century and the first quarter of the present there was a group of remarkable women who exerted a certain influence upon the literature of their time ; women who, by their exemplary lives and the purity of their writings, if not by the force of their genius, deserve to be rescued from the oblivion into which their memories are rapidly falling. I allude to Hannah More, Joanna Baillie, and Mrs. Barbauld, names that are only dimly suggestive to the modern reader.

Yet there is something refreshing, in these days of feverish excitement and literary over-activity, in looking back upon those calm, leisurely, old-world lives to which authorship was a pleasing recreation, not a jading task. It is like leaving the clamour and bustle of London for some quiet country nook, and lying down upon the grass and looking upward at the dancing leaves flecking the bright blue sky, and dreaming of the past. In the present paper I propose to tell the story of the last-named of the group—Mrs. Barbauld.

Ann Letitia Aikin was born at Kibworth Harcourt, a village of Leicestershire, on the 20th of June, 1743, and was the eldest child and only daughter of John Aikin, Presbyterian minister and school-master. Without sisters, or companions of her own age and sex, brought up in the strictest seclusion and according to the austere code of manners affected by the Dissenters at that period, her childhood was a gloomy one. Reading was her chief amusement. Her father's library was small, but it contained some of the masterpieces of literature, and to the usual curriculum of study she added Latin, and even something of Greek.

In the isolation of this out-of-the-world Midland village, knowing no other pleasure than she found in books—her only friend her brother John, who was by three years her junior—the girl passed the first fifteen years of her life. Just at that time her father was appointed classical tutor to a somewhat famous Dissenting academy at Warrington, which numbered amongst its masters such men as Dr. Priestly and Dr. Enfield.

A new and more cheerful life opened to our young heroine in her new home ; she made acquaintances among the ladies of the neighbourhood, and became a member of pleasant circles, to which her beauty and talent rendered her a welcome addition. Writing of this period, Lucy Aikin, in her memoir of her aunt, says :

“The fifteen succeeding years passed by her at Warrington comprehended, probably, the happiest, as well as the most brilliant portion of her existence. She was at this time possessed of great beauty, distinct traces of which she retained to the latest period of life. Her

person was slender, her complexion exquisitely fair, with the bloom of perfect health ; her features were regular and elegant, and her dark blue eyes beamed with the light of wit and fancy." The tutors and the elder pupils of the seminary, together with some residents of educated taste, formed quite a little literary coterie—such as were by no means uncommon in the provincial towns during the last century, before railroads had centralised the whole intellectual life of the kingdom within a few miles' radius of Charing Cross.

In 1771 her brother John came to settle in Warrington, and it was by his persuasion that she made her first literary venture, in the shape of a volume of poems, written at different periods, which appeared in 1773. So great was the success of this undertaking that, in the same year, she joined him in bringing out another volume, which bore the title of "*Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse, by J. and L. Aikin.*" It was received as favourably as its predecessor had been, and attracted the attention of some of the most famous literati of the day : even of Dr. Johnson, who pronounced that in her essay "*On Romance*" she had given the best imitation of his own style that had yet appeared, since she had succeeded in "imitating the sentiment as well as the diction."

In 1774, when she was in her thirty-first year, Miss Aikin became Mrs. Barbauld. Mr. Rochemont Barbauld was of French descent. His grandfather was a Huguenot, who had been driven from France at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes ; his father was a clergyman of the Church of England, and Rochemont was intended for the same calling, but strangely enough was sent to the Dissenting college at Warrington for his education. And here, probably, the bright eyes and fascinating manners of Anna Letitia did as much as conscientious conviction to bring him over to the Presbyterian faith. Without fortune, and having voluntarily deprived himself of such advancement as his father's position might have obtained for him, the young man's prospects were too uncertain to warrant his taking a wife, and the lovers had to wait patiently for the consummation of their happiness until he was called to undertake the charge of a congregation at Palgrave, near Diss, in Suffolk.

To be the minister of a Dissenting chapel in a small country village was no very brilliant opening, and would scarcely have given the young couple the means of living ; so they determined to open a boarding-school. The literary fame which the lady had won in her maiden days was no doubt a great assistance to such an undertaking, the success of which at once placed them in a comfortable position. Two or three of their pupils afterwards became men of mark, notably Chief Justice Denman, and William Taylor, of Norwich, who, by his excellent translations of Goethe's "*Iphigenia*," and Bürger's ballad of "*Leonore*," was the first pioneer of German literature in this country.

That Mrs. Barbauld found in her married life that perfect happiness

that all lovers anticipate and so few married people realise, is more than doubtful. Mr. Barbauld was of a singularly irritable and excitable temperament—an infirmity which increased with years and ultimately assumed the form of mania; and children, which she ardently desired, were not vouchsafed to them. But she was a brave, cheerful woman, thoroughly healthy in body and mind, who always looked on the bright side of life and never gave way to repinings. Her letters to her brother, during her residence at Palgrave, are full of this spirit, and give some pleasant glimpses of her life at that period. Here is an extract from one dated 1775.

“To prove to you that I am not lazy, I will tell you what I have been about. First, then, making up beds; secondly, scolding my maids, preparing for company; and lastly, drawing up and delivering lectures on geography. Give me joy of our success, for we shall have twenty-seven scholars before the vacation, and two more have bespoke places at Midsummer; so that we do not doubt of being soon full: nay, sir, I can assure you it is said in this country, that it will soon be a favour to be on Mr. Barbauld’s list:—you have no objection, I hope, to a little boasting.”

So great was the success of the school that after eleven years they had realised sufficient to give it up and start for a twelvemonth’s holiday travel upon the Continent.

Her brother was now married, and the father of several children, and out of his abundance of olive-branches she begged one to adopt for her own childless home. A boy was sent to her request, and it was for little Charles that she wrote the “Early Lessons,” which commenced quite a new era in juvenile literature. “Before Mrs. Trimmer and Mrs. Barbauld,” says Hannah More, “in my early youth, there was scarcely anything between ‘Cinderella’ and the *Spectator* for young persons.” “Early Lessons” has been one of the models upon which children’s books have been constructed ever since; and so great was its popularity that it was translated into French.

Soon after their return to England, in 1786, Mr. Barbauld was appointed minister to a small congregation at Hampstead, and they took a house in Church Row. A strange, old, quaint thoroughfare still is Church Row, much the same as it was then; ay, or when Sherlock and Arbuthnot were amongst its residents, with its tall, flat, brick houses, and shrub-embowered, ivy-mantled church, which give it all the air of a cathedral close. There is nothing picturesque in the spot, but there is a suggestiveness, a harmony in the homogeneous ugliness, a delicious repose, a grave air of ancient respectability that carries you back into the days when these buildings were new. At noonday its pavements are almost deserted, and the houses look silent and gloomy, as though some venerable relics of the last century, old gentlemen in breeches and silk stockings and buckled shoes, and brass-buttoned coats and tie-wigs, had taken refuge here, upon this

new Ararat, from the deluge of modernism that has swallowed up all the rest of their old world.

Strolling through the iron gates into the shaded grass-grown churchyard, with its old-fashioned lichen-stained tombstones, down its sloping sides into the bottom hollow, you might dream and meditate for an hour together undisturbed by an intruding presence, only by the sound of occasional passers-by on the pathway above wending their way to and from the lane to Frognal. But beyond the green leaves, stretching away through acres of fog and smoke and grey opaqueness, until its boundaries are lost against the Surrey hills, lie the turmoil and the densely thronged streets of London; and borne upon the wind like the surge of the far-off sea, soothing and lulling by its dull monotony, comes the roar of its restless life.

How often must Letitia Barbauld, and Joanna Baillie, who now repose there, and many many other frequenters of the quaint old village, have loitered in these breezy precincts and looked down with similar thoughts upon this same landscape. Hampstead was quite a country town in those days, and was removed from the metropolis by long stretches of open fields, by dusty country roads, which became such Sloughs of Despond in winter as to render personal communication with London extremely difficult at times. Hampstead had not yet attained its great literary era; the old Well Walk was not yet hallowed by the presence of Keats; the Vale of Health knew not yet the presence of pleasant, easy-going Leigh Hunt, who brought Shelley and Coleridge and Lamb to stroll with him over the breezy heath, and leave there the impress of their footsteps evermore, grafting on the loveliness of Nature the intellectual beauty of poetry; but it had its literary coterie, not to be compared with the group first-named, but still celebrated at this time, chief of which were the Baillie sisters, and to which our new-comer made a valuable addition.

It was during her residence here that she joined her brother in the composition of the once-famous children's book, "Evenings at Home;" only fourteen out of the ninety-nine pieces it contains, however, were the production of her pen. The ferment of the French Revolution infected even the quiet precincts of Church Row, and Mrs. Barbauld became an enthusiastic advocate of the popular cause, writing pamphlets and identifying herself with the extreme English party; which brought down upon her the wrath of Horace Walpole in two of his letters to the Misses Berry, in which he stigmatises her as "that virago, Barbauld."

About this time we get the following graphic sketch of the couple from the pen of Fanny Burney:—

"She is much altered, but not for the worse to me, though she is for herself; since the flight of her youth, which is evident, has also taken with it a great portion of an almost set smile, which had an

air of determined complacence and prepared acquiescence that seemed to result from a sweetness which never risked being off guard. I remember Mrs. Chapone's saying to me, after our interview, 'She is a very good young woman, as well as replete with talents; but why must one always smile so? It makes my poor jaws ache to look at her.'

She describes Mr. Barbauld as being "a very little, diminutive figure, but well bred and sensible."

In 1802, they removed from Hampstead to what was then another quaint suburb, but one which the iconoclastic hand of modern improvement has long since spoiled, Stoke Newington, Mr. Barbauld having been appointed minister to the chapel upon the Green. There resided her brother, Dr. Aikin. Sir Henry Holland tells us in his *Reminiscences* how he passed some time at his house, where he met his sister, and adds: "Mrs. Barbauld, who lived close to him, and his daughter Lucy Aikin, gave a certain literary repute to this tranquil village. I met at several parties at one or other of the houses, writers of repute of that day, now almost or wholly forgotten."

The terrible excesses into which the French Revolution degenerated were bitterly disappointing to Mrs. Barbauld as well as to all other true friends to liberty; and in one of her letters, dated 1802, there is the first wail of weariness her cheerful spirit has uttered. "My enthusiasm is all gone," she writes, "not for Buonaparte, for with regard to him I never had any, but for most things. I wish, then, by any process, electric, galvanic, or through any other medium, we might recover some of the fine feelings which age is so apt to blunt: it would be the true secret of growing young again."

In 1808 a terrible affliction, almost the first in her peculiarly tranquil life, fell upon her. Mr. Barbauld, whose strange aberrations had given her great uneasiness for some time past, was found drowned in the New River.

She continued to reside at Stoke Newington, in a house on the south side of Church Street, which is now a jeweller's shop, still actively engaged in literary pursuits. Soon after her husband's death she edited a collection of *British Novelists* in fifty volumes, to which she appended biographical and critical notices of each writer; she also edited a book of selections which was familiar enough to us thirty or forty years ago—"The Enfield Speaker." In Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, and in her own and Lucy Aikin's letters, we obtain several pleasant glimpses of her in her old age.

"Went to Mrs. Barbauld's," writes Crabb Robinson (1821): "she was in good spirits, but she is now the confirmed old lady. Independently of her fine understanding and literary reputation, she would be interesting. Her white locks, fair and unwrinkled skin, brilliant starched linen, and rich silk gown, make her a fit subject for a painter. Her conversation is lively, her remarks judicious and always pertinent."

But the end was coming fast, and it was almost time ; one by one the friends of her youth and her maturity were dropping into the grave, and leaving her in all the sad desolation of an extreme old age. On March 9, 1825, death came and found her full of serene hope and quiet faith. She lies buried in the chapel on the Green.

Her niece pays a rare tribute to her memory when she says : " She passed through a long life without having dropped, it is believed, a single friendship, and without having drawn upon herself a single enmity which could properly be called personal."

As a writer Mrs. Barbauld's fame has almost passed away. Several of her poems have much merit ; Wordsworth considered her one of the best poetesses this country had produced, and forgot his habitual egotism so far in her favour as to envy her having written the last verse of her poem called " Life." " I am not in the habit of envying people their good things," he would say, " but I wish I had written those lines." The stanza is as follows :

" Life ! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather :
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear :
Then steal away, give little warning ;
Choose thine own time ;
Say not good night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good morning."

But her poetry belongs to that artificial didactic school of the eighteenth century which is so antipathetic to the present age, and must remain in oblivion until the wheel of Time brings round again its fashion. Her prose style, however, is admirable, being modelled upon our best writers ; both Macaulay and Mackintosh were warm in their praise of it. Commenting upon a charming little essay, entitled " Inconsistent Expectations," Crabb Robinson says : " I hold it to be one of the most exquisite morsels of English prose ever written. And it had the most salutary effect on me." She was by no means a voluminous writer ; two moderately-sized octavos, if we except her children's books, suffice to contain her effusions in poetry and prose—the latter consisting entirely of short essays, after the manner of Addison and Johnson—and her political pamphlets. Besides the collected edition of the British Novelists, previously referred to, she edited an edition of Richardson's Letters, and wrote an excellent memoir of him.

H. BARTON BAKER.



SHROVE-TIDE IN IRELAND.

BY NARISSA ROSAVO.

WE were a Saxon invasion of tourists to Ireland. Being determined to see it thoroughly we were not in too great a hurry. Having therefore waited a reasonable time, by diligent search we at length accomplished one object of our visit. We came upon a conventional cottage. Vast hillocks and morasses of sandy manure fronted it. Green water flowed from this on to the road, in the midst of which a party of half-naked children played, busy with a rotten old wheelbarrow, which had just collapsed; and over whose decrepitude they were far merrier than young scions of noble houses often are in their gilded nurseries. "Is your mother at home?" we asked.

"Noa."

The lady we were in quest of, however, appeared just then at her half-door, a contrivance manufactured and used in Ireland to keep out the hens and let in *some* light; but not too much to reveal home secrets. As our guide was a kind patroness she was warmly welcomed, and requested to come "the clane way, your honour!" This was a very dirty path indeed, but we were rewarded. An immense sow lay by the fire, over which the "prathies" boiled; and near her gambolled twelve boniffs, all as happy within doors as were the children without.

It was Shrove Tuesday, and the eldest "boy" was to be married that night. "Would we not honour the wedding with our presence?" We accepted the invitation with the utmost delight; and, indeed, but for one contretemps must have completely enjoyed the frolic. It was a very late one. The priest was so busy all day, what with marrying, burying, and confessing, that our ceremony could not come off until so near midnight that the bride was to remain over Lent with her own people—being fetched at Easter by the husband and friends at what is called the Hauling Home festival, performed amid singing, drinking, shouting and bonfiring: all riding in procession, in couples: a man and woman on each horse.

The night was very dark. As we reached the ugly, unadorned chapel, the crowd grew more and more dense, but the utmost deference was shown to us, "the quality." We were ushered immediately into the vestry, as a mark of respect. There sat the bride by a gloomy little fire. She was very plain indeed, with high cheek bones and a deep fixed red colour, but her cloak was of finest black cloth, the hood being lined with the best satin. Our hostess, who was mistress of the soil here, sat down to make talk kindly for

this very uninteresting lady, to whose wedding we had come. She was rather inclined to be affable and communicative.

"I suppose you know Cornelius very well?"

"Pretty fair, thin."

"When did you see him first?"

"Why, thin, on Thursday last."

"But you have seen a good deal of him since, I suppose?"

"Noa thin, niver at all, but just now I saw him at the door there."

"And do you like him?"

"I do, thin; he's a purty lad."

"And does it cost much to get married?"

"It do this; twelve pound we pays to-night. It comes hard enough this bad year, and Corney he wanted his rivrence to wait until the harvest for the money; but, says he, 'Corney,' says he, 'tis for the love I have for ye I can't do it, boy; I done it three times,' says he, 'and it were a bad job for 'em all, those couples. One, the pair they died,' says he, 'afore the harvest, and t'other, why, they quarrelled like,' says he, 'and the third'—why, glory be to God, your honour, ma'am, I forget what he said on the third; but says Cornelius, 'Your honour's rivrence, Johanna an' me we'll make the money out somehow,' says he, 'an' the champagne too, for your rivrence to drink our health in.'"

Meantime the eventful hour was approaching. Johanna stood as the priest entered, and dropped a low curtesy. He was a nice-looking elderly man. His sacristan, the chapel wardeness, was a very old and horribly dirty woman. From some obscure and mouldy corner she drew forth Father John's vestments and got him into them. She then took, from the vestry chimney board, the rush candle stuck in a bottle by whose light we had all sat and talked, and she conducted us into the chapel. What she held made the only glimmer thrown upon the proceedings. The chapel corners, and the end of the aisle, or nave, gloried in complete obscurity. A great many steps led to the altar. Up these we were taken (somewhat to our distress) by the old woman and the priest. More by far was made of us heretics than of the principal personages in the drama. It was insisted upon that we should take seats within the sacrarium. We had to yield. Through the whole ceremony the old woman waved her rushlight in its bottle, and fluttered rays and grease in every direction as far as they would go.

The marriage was all over in about ten minutes or so, and the bridegroom, who was even uglier than the bride, kissed his lady with a loud, merry smack. His rivrence prepared for a fresh couple, and we were allowed to mingle with the crowd. As we lingered over our departing, watching and listening, and being greatly entertained, we overheard a conversation between two men, who, it is to be supposed from the sequel, had taken more liquor than was wholesome.

"And why don't you get married to-night, Timsey?"

"'Taint none o' my fault. 'Tis nine of the colleens I asked to marry mè to-day; and they refused me."

"The night's not over yet, man. Can't ye look about ye still."

This was rather difficult considering the semi-darkness, but to our consternation the speaker pointed out the tallest, who was also the largest of our party. "There's a fine, cliver, strapping young ooman. Maybe she'd have ye, boy."

Before we could escape the other had advanced and tapped the object of their admiration on the shoulder. "Come now, my girl, what do you say to our being spliced to-night, afore the Lent?" he observed coaxingly.

The kind old priest had his eye upon our safety, however. He advanced, and leaving the next couple to wait his leisure he ordered the rude clown to move off. "An' now, boys," he added, calling to all present in stentorian and dictatorial tones: "Now, boys, I'll have none o' ye building them little walls outside. Remember, when the ladies, *and Protestant ladies*, honour us with their presence you must treat them as such." What he here alluded to was an almost universal practice pursued on a marriage night, of putting up obstructions in the road for the wedding couples and guests to fall over and thereby cause laughter.

In accordance with his orders we were now conducted with all honour to the bride's home, and through the outer room, laid with long tables of food, to an inner and grander sanctum, specially prepared for such honourable guests. Piles of potatoes were heaped against the walls, but space for four chairs and a small round table had been left near the doorway.

Oranges, lump sugar, and a bottle of bad wine were laid ready for us to partake of and linger over. These viands are the regulation fare for the quality, who, while they sit sucking or crunching the sugar, are supposed to amuse themselves watching the feasting in the room without, where all goes on in a most "flawhule" style—"lashins," or abundance, of very fat pork being the staple commodity. And it is not a good feast unless so much is provided that a great deal must be left. To say "there was lashins and lavins" means, therefore, that all things were as they should be at the banquet.

When they could all eat no more, the tables were cleared away, and a door was taken off its hinges for the dancing. The smaller the space your feet cover in a jig or a hornpipe the more your skill is praised. Presently an old man made his way through the crowd to our alcove. He had no coat on, but made up the deficiency with three waistcoats, and two hats pressed tight down on his head. He seized and wrung our host's hand with much fervour. "Faith an' 'tis yourself I'm glad to see here, and I'd sooner shake hands with your honour than with the finest gintleman in the land, an' 'tis a wonder entirely to see me here to-night, at all at all. They asked

myself, sure enough, your honour, but niver a one of my boys. So I thought I'd bring 'em all wid me, just to show them ignorant Carties I had the finest four lads in the counthry."

The boys in question ranged in age betwixt thirty and forty, and had families of their own. They were introduced to us. Their old father was a great friend and admirer of his young mistress.

A few months later he was taken with his death sickness—a bad attack of bronchitis. The young lady was very sorry, and sent him down some jujubes, following them herself next day. "Well, Darby, and I hear you are very ill! I am so grieved. Did you take those things I sent you down, and did they do you good?"

The poor old gentleman lay smothering in his dirty bed, himself the dirtiest and most miserable thing in the house; but he must have his joke to the last, and this time it was a pathetic one. "Faith, thin," he muttered, "sure they did. And I'm thinkin', faith, that, though I'm an ugly ould savage of a lad, anything your honour gave me would do me good; an' if 'twas a kiss from your honour 'twould maybe set me up altogether."

His old wife was so shocked at this sally that the young lady had to retire as soon as might be, for quietness sake.

This old lady had a favourite hen, and when Darby had died she attached herself to it very exclusively, and would take it with her to hear mass. One day, unfortunately, while the office was proceeding, Mrs. Hen laid an egg, and talked too loudly of her performance. When next the priest met her he requested that in future the old woman should leave her pet at home.

"Sure maybe, your rivrence, 'tis the way the neighbours might steal it off me."

"Well, then, keep it quiet in future under your cloak, Biddy." And she did so.



A FREAK OF FORTUNE.

“CORDON, s'il vous plaît !”

In answer to the above accentuated summons, a clicking sound was heard in the adjoining sanctum of the concierge, and the street door, opening as it were by magic, closed again a few seconds later with a loud bang.

“Who was that, Mourier ?” asked the porter’s wife, who was engaged in preparing a savoury fricot, the odour of which pervaded the entire lower part of the house, for the conjugal supper.

“Only the fifth floor,” replied the individual addressed, in a contemptuous tone.

“Has he paid his rent ?” pursued Madame Cerberus.

“Not he. Two quarters owing, and not a stick of furniture worth seizing. If I were monsieur, he would have had his congé six months ago.”

“He is a good-looking young fellow,” remarked Madame Mourier, as she poured the contents of the saucepan into a dish ready for their reception.

“Humph !” growled her husband, who might himself have successfully competed for the prize of ugliness in his arrondissement ; “can’t say I see it. A poor devil of a clerk in a notary’s office with a salary of eight hundred francs a year, and as proud as Lucifer into the bargain !”

“That doesn’t prevent his having a handsome face of his own, does it ?” sharply retorted his spouse. “And he might have a worse capital to start with,” she added.

“It hasn’t been of much service to him yet, apparently,” chuckled M. Mourier.

“Rome wasn’t built in a day,” said madame ; and the conversation dropped.

Meanwhile, the unconscious subject of the foregoing dialogue had left the Rue Visconti—in which narrow and dingy offshoot of the Faubourg St. Germain he occupied two diminutive attics, by courtesy called the fifth floor—far behind him, and was striding rapidly in the direction of the Pont des Arts. As he approached the bridge he slackened his pace, and took up his post by the parapet immediately facing the Institut ; thereby commanding a view of everyone crossing from the opposite side of the river.

He had not waited more than five minutes, before his eyes brightened as he beheld the slight figure of a young girl advancing towards him. After a few words of greeting he drew her arm within his, and the lovers—for such they were—disappeared through the passage leading from the quay into the Rue de Seine.

It was a lovely evening in July, 1878, that memorable Exhibition year which for months together transformed the fair city of Paris into a huge caravansary thronged with pilgrims of every degree, and indiscriminately dispensing its somewhat costly hospitalities to all who could afford to pay for them. Even the Faubourg St. Germain, in ordinary times so still and lonely after sunset, displayed an unusually animated aspect, owing to the influx of foreign and provincial visitors attracted to that transpontine quarter by its comparative cheapness. And more than one passing stranger cast an admiring glance on the youthful couple as, on reaching the extremity of the Rue de Tournon, they skirted the Luxembourg, and entered a corner house in the Rue Soufflot. Madam Duvivier, the mother of our heroine, who occupied a small apartment overlooking the Place du Panthéon, was anxiously awaiting their arrival.

"I thought you were never coming, children," she exclaimed from the top of the staircase, where she had stood sentinel for the last quarter of an hour. "It is past nine, and I do not like Louise to be out so late."

"Only once in a way, mother dear," replied the young lady, as she tripped lightly up a flight of steps steep enough to put even a schoolboy's climbing powers to the test; "such a delicious evening, and so refreshing after the heat, that one feels tempted to remain out all night. Besides, you know you can trust me with Maurice. Can she not?" she added, turning towards her companion; and, without waiting for an answer, passed through the open door into a little sitting-room where the table was laid for supper, declaring that she was intolerably hungry.

A less partial spectator than Madame Duvivier might have been pardoned for contemplating admiringly the bright-featured, fair-haired damsel, as she gaily did the honours of the modest repast, and rallied the young man who sat beside her on his persistent taciturnity.

"You must scold him, mother," she said. "He has been terribly low-spirited all the evening; discontented with his position; the old story, you know, and though I tell him, if he will only have patience, things must improve some day, he won't believe me."

"I can't help it if I am not so sanguine as you are, Louise," objected Maurice, "but the more I look at the future before me, the blacker it appears. What prospects have I but the same perpetual drudgery month after month, year after year, earning just enough to keep me from starving, but not sufficient for the one object of my existence, the hope of calling you my wife!"

"You are not reasonable, Maurice," replied his betrothed. "If I am content to wait for better days, why should you repine? Is it not wiser cheerfully to accept things as they are, rather than brood over what they might have been? We are both young, and time will neither lessen our confidence in each other, nor prevent our enjoying happiness when it comes. You might do worse than copy

wills and marriage contracts for Maître Guérizot, and where should we be, mother and I, without the hundred francs a month which M. Patterson gives me for correcting his daughter's American French? By-the-by," continued the volatile girl, suddenly changing her tone, and extracting from her pocket a bundle of little papers, "she gave me something to-day—only think—a dozen tickets for the Exhibition lottery! Keep them for me, Maurice, and mind you look at the numbers when the drawing takes place, and tell me what I have won."

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," said Maurice, smiling in spite of himself, and putting the tickets carefully into his portemonnaie. "Luck isn't at everyone's beck and call, you know!"

"Speak for yourself, monsieur," retorted the young lady. "Everyone has the chance of a prize until he gets a blank. Am I not right, mother?"

"So right," asserted Madame Duvivier, fondly stroking her child's silky hair, "that the subject may be considered as exhausted. And, as it is nearly half-past eleven, and a certain person's concierge would be mortally offended if he were kept up until midnight, I recommend Maurice to make the best of his way to the Rue Visconti."

Which Maurice, after some demur and a good deal of unnecessary delay, finally did.

It will have been seen from the foregoing conversation that the notary's clerk and Miss Patterson's instructress were on tolerably intimate terms, and that their mutual attachment was sanctioned by the approval of Madame Duvivier; but how the affection they evidently entertained for each other had originated has not yet been recorded.

Nothing could be simpler or less romantic than the story of their lives. Both natives of the same provincial town, whither Maurice's father, Captain Lapeyrie, had retired with his newly married wife on quitting the service, and had there contracted a close friendship with M. Duvivier, a physician of some local eminence, they had been brought up, so to speak, together, the intercourse between their parents being so constant that the two ménages might almost be considered as one family.

A favourite project with the Captain, which he was not destined to see realized, was the future union of his son with the daughter of his friend. This desire being earnestly shared by his wife, and cordially reciprocated by Monsieur and Madame Duvivier, the young people, as time went on, and Maurice was already twenty and Louise a year younger, were allowed full liberty to fall in love with each other, which—under the circumstances a not altogether improbable consequence—they naturally did.

This early stage of their courtship was shortly after interrupted by

the departure of the young Lapeyrie for Paris, where he purposed studying for the bar. He had, however, scarcely commenced the necessary preliminaries, when he was hastily summoned home by the tidings that his father and mother had both been suddenly attacked by a fever then prevalent in the locality, and arrived only in time to receive their last blessing, and to feel that he was henceforth alone in the world. Misfortunes, it is said, never come singly. A few months later M. Duvivier, while visiting a country patient, was thrown from his horse, fractured his skull, and never spoke afterwards.

On examining the state of his affairs, it was discovered that they were greatly embarrassed. With the exception of what might be realized by the sale of the furniture and a small sum of ready money, the widow and her daughter were left entirely without resource. Many were the consultations as to their future plans between the former and Maurice. His position was even more disastrous, his father's pension having died with him, and the value of the few personal effects remaining in the lodgings occupied by him being, after payment of the funeral and other incidental expenses, absolutely nil.

It was at length resolved that Paris alone offering a possible prospect of lucrative employment for Maurice, whose intention of continuing his studies must necessarily, from sheer want of funds, be abandoned, he should at once repair thither, and be followed by Madame Duvivier and Louise, as soon as he could hold out any hope to the latter of utilising, either by tuition or otherwise, the excellent education she had received. The results of this expedition were, first, the young man's admission, through the influence of a barrister whose acquaintance he had made during his former stay in the capital, as supplementary clerk in the notary's office. And secondly, the installation of the two ladies in the Rue Soufflot, and the engagement of Mademoiselle Louise—who by her mother's advice had inserted an advertisement in *Galignani's Messenger*—as reader and general initiator into the beauties of the French language to the wealthy American heiress, Miss Patterson.

Three months had elapsed since the evening of our hero and heroine's introduction to the reader, and no material change had taken place in the position of either. Maurice, indeed, had succeeded by dint of the strictest economy in wiping off the arrear of rent due to his landlord, but in every other respect things had remained exactly in statu quo.

Any likelihood of his marriage with Louise seemed farther off than ever. For, although he still continued to accompany her of an evening on her return from the Rue de Rivoli—where Mr. Patterson had engaged a suite of apartments in one of the principal hotels—and was as kindly welcomed by Madame Duvivier as heretofore: yet in his present precarious situation, dependent as he was on his ill-remunerated labour for the scantiest means of subsistence, he felt

that nothing short of a miracle could enable him to surmount the obstacles which no unaided efforts of his own could possibly remove.

Such was the unpromising state of things when, one morning towards the end of October, Maître Guérizot, the much respected notary of the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, busily engaged in perusing a pile of letters placed for his inspection on the table of his private room, summoned his head clerk through the medium of an orifice in the wall communicating with the outer office.

"M. Fréjacques," he said, on the appearance of that functionary, (the notary was always scrupulously polite to his subordinates), "here is a paper that must be attended to immediately. Maître Lhuillier, my colleague at Gisors, has forwarded it to me that it may be registered and delivered to the proper authorities; and as it concerns a client of his, lately deceased, he is anxious to have the matter settled without delay."

M. Fréjacques stared. "I should have thought, monsieur," he said, "that the necessary formalities might as easily have been completed at Gisors as in Paris."

"In ordinary cases certainly," replied the notary. "But the individual in question has died intestate, and as it would seem that no relative or other legitimate heir to his property can be found, it naturally goes to the state. But," he continued, "it will be necessary to have the deed recopied, for my good friend's handwriting is so illegible that even I, who am accustomed to strange specimens of penmanship, have had some difficulty in deciphering it. As it must be read before it is registered, the people at the office might be forced to have recourse to an expert in autographs in order to discover what it means. Give it to one of your young men, and let me see it when it is finished."

"I will give it to Lapeyrie," answered the head clerk as he left the room. Maître Guérizot, after regaling himself with a pinch of snuff, opened another letter, and was soon absorbed in its contents.

A quarter of an hour later, M. Fréjacques reappeared, and informed his principal that Lapeyrie, the clerk whom he had charged with the copying of the deed, wished to speak with him.

"Let him come in," said the notary rather testily, for he disliked being interrupted. "Well, what is it?" he inquired, as Maurice, holding in his hand the document entrusted to him, entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," replied the latter in an unusually excited tone, "but this paper, if I understand it rightly, sets forth that the money and other goods belonging to the late M. Justin Isidore Chaumontel, in default of natural heirs, become the property of the state."

"Of course they do," said Maître Guérizot impatiently. "Why do you ask?"

"Because, monsieur, the writer has evidently been misinformed.

The family is not extinct, for one member of it to my knowledge still exists."

"Eh!" ejaculated the notary, pushing back his chair in extreme amazement. "What do you mean?"

"M. Chaumontel was my mother's uncle," replied Maurice simply. "Her father and he had quarrelled on account of her marriage, and since then no intercourse had taken place between them, and we knew not whether he was alive or dead."

"Can you prove the relationship?" asked Maître Guérizot after a moment's pause.

"Undoubtedly," answered the young man. "The papers concerning my family and myself are in my possession."

"Bring them to me," said the notary. "When I have examined them, I will write to Maître Lhuillier stating your claims to the succession; and if they are admitted, as in the absence of any nearer relative they probably will be, the state will be the poorer by some two hundred thousand francs. Is not that the amount of your great uncle's property?"

"I scarcely looked at the sum, monsieur," replied Maurice. "I was so thunderstruck with the news that I could hardly believe my eyes."

"Well," said Maître Guérizot, "they seem to have done you good service at any rate; so let me have the papers at once. And perhaps, all circumstances considered," he added, with a significant smile, "it would be as well, in the interest of my clients, to relieve you from your duties in the office until we hear from Gisors."

We need not dwell on the hopes and fears which agitated the little community assembled that evening in the Rue Soufflot, nor on the correspondence which subsequently ensued between the two notaries on the subject of our hero's claims. Suffice it to say that no other candidate presenting himself, and the relationship having been satisfactorily proved, he was in the course of a few weeks put in possession of his inheritance, the total amount of which, including the proceeds of the sale of his late relative's house and furniture at Gisors, exceeded two hundred and forty thousand francs, which were advantageously invested for him on mortgage by Maître Guérizot.

His marriage with Louise being necessarily retarded owing to the recent death of their parents, he applied himself seriously to the prosecution of his legal studies, after exchanging his comfortless quarters in the Rue Visconti—much to the regret of Madame Mourier, who had always been proud of her handsome locataire—for a pleasanter lodging overlooking the garden of the Luxembourg. Every evening he was at his accustomed post near the Pont des Arts, awaiting the arrival of his betrothed, who, independent young lady as she was, had steadily refused to discontinue her daily duties in the Rue de Rivoli as long as her pupil remained in Paris. On one of

these occasions, towards the beginning of November, he was more than usually impatient for her coming. No sooner had she appeared and taken his arm than he whispered in her ear:

"I have a surprise for you, Louise!"

"What is it?" she asked eagerly. "Stay, let me guess; you are going to plead at the Palais?"

"Rather premature," he replied, "considering that I am not yet called to the bar. Try again."

"You have something for me in your pocket?"

"This time you are nearer the mark. You remember 71,453?"

"What *do* you mean?" inquired Louise, completely puzzled.

"71,453," he repeated in an impressive tone. "A lucky number, is it not?"

"How should I know?" she answered wonderingly. "What possible interest can it have for me?"

"More than you imagine," said Maurice, "since you happen to be indebted to that very number in the Exhibition lottery for a pearl necklace worth seventy-five thousand francs, or sixty thousand in money, whichever you choose."

"Oh! Maurice," exclaimed the young girl, her eyes sparkling with delight. "Is it really true? Are you quite certain?"

"Dame!" reflected her lover, gravely stroking his moustache, "printers do make mistakes sometimes. But," he added, noticing her look of disappointment, "as I took the precaution of comparing the newspaper paragraph I have here with the official list, I think that on the whole I may congratulate you on having made Miss Patterson's acquaintance."

"And darling mother's mind will be easy at last," said Louise, fondly pressing the arm on which she leant; "for M. Maurice's wife will not be *quite* portionless after all!"

CHARLES HERVEY.



GOOD NIGHT !

THE lilies by the garden walks
 Stand white, and sweet, and tall,
 And down the shady moss-grown paths
 Calm twilight touches fall.
 The chafer hums his heavy tune,
 The glowworm trims his lamp,
 And one by one all sounds are stilled
 Out in the world's huge camp.

Good night ! Good night !

Deep in the darkness of the wood,
 Before the west grows pale,
 In fitful snatches trills and sings
 A full-voiced nightingale :
 As though some sentinel of God
 Watches o'er those who rest,
 And bids the fires of toil and pain
 Burn low in ev'ry breast.

Good night ! Good night !

My darling, there is light enough
 Out in the far away,
 And through the open window steals
 A pleasant scent of hay.
 A cool wind blows upon my face ;
 The stars are bright o'erhead ;
 There's perfect rest, and perfect peace,
 Now the fierce day is dead.

Good night ! Good night !

I hear the ripple and the plash
 Of the reed-bordered stream ;
 Betwixt bright banks I seem to float
 As in a quiet dream.

Yes ! we are drifting to the sea

Swiftly, I think, my dear ;

But O ! how calm the waters are !

How bright ! how blue ! how clear !

Good night ! Good night !

The dawn is breaking on us fast,
 Purple and red and gold ;
 I hear the crowing of the cocks,
 The bleatings of the fold.

Belovèd, I shall soon be well,

I feel so glad and bright :

To-morrow will be with us soon,

Till then ——

Good night ! Good night !

T. S. CUNNINGHAM.



THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIII.

FOLLY.

THERE is no misfortune on earth so great as that of a troubled conscience : there is nothing that will wear the spirits and the frame like a burdensome secret that may not be told. It will blanch the cheek and sicken the heart ; it will render the day a terror and the bed weary ; so that the unhappy victim will be tempted to say with Job : When shall I arise and the night be gone ? He is full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day : his sleep is scared with dreams and terrified with visions.

Had Mrs. Oscar Dalrymple been of a different temperament, this unhappy state of mind would have been hers. But she had no very deep feeling. Troubled in a degree she undoubtedly was. That terrible secret, the debts she had incurred, lay on her mind always in a greater or a less degree ; for she knew that her husband when he paid them would be half ruined ; certainly crippled for years.

Another season had come round and was at its height ; and Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple had again come up to it. The past autumn and winter had been spent at Moat Grange, which Selina found insufferably dull, and where her chief solace and recreation consisted in looking over her beautiful and extensive wardrobe, and trying on portions of it in private. A very negative sort of enjoyment. Where was the use of possessing these divine dresses and adjuncts, when no field was afforded for their display ? Selina had ventured to wear one costly robe on a certain evening that she dined at Court Netherleigh, and was severely taken to task by her mother, who was the only other guest, and by Miss Upton, for appearing in such "finery." They asked her what she meant by such extravagance. And that before Oscar too ! Selina blushed a little and laughed it

off: but she mentally wondered what would have been said had she put on her very finest, or if they saw the stock at home.

During the winter Selina had a fever, brought on, it was thought, from exposing herself unduly to damp. She grew better, but was somewhat delicate and very capricious. Oscar, loving her intensely, grew to humour her fancies and to pet her as if she were a spoiled child. Her conscience reproached her now and then for the tacit deceit she was enacting, in thus suffering him to live in blissful ignorance of their true position; but on the whole it did not trouble her greatly. Alice, her sensitive sister, would have died under it; Selina contrived to exist very comfortably.

"If you found out that I had done anything dreadfully wrong, would you quite kill me, Oscar?" she playfully said to him one day.

"Dare say I should," answered Oscar, putting on a face of mock-severity. "Might depend, perhaps, upon what the thing was."

"Ah, no; you'd just scold me for five minutes, and then kiss and be friends. I always said you'd never turn out to be an old griffin."

That was the nearest approach Selina ever made towards confessing to her husband. And Oscar had but looked upon it as a bit of passing pleasantry.

Alice Dalrymple had left her mother's house to become companion to Lady Sarah Hope. During a week's visit that Colonel Hope and his wife made to Miss Upton in the autumn—it was soon after they had got into their new house in London—Alice had also been staying at Court Netherleigh. One day Lady Sarah chanced to say she wished she could find some nice, young gentlewoman, who would come to her in the capacity of companion; upon which Alice said, "Would you take me?" "Ay, and be glad to get you," returned Lady Sarah, supposing that Alice had spoken in jest. Alice, however, was in earnest. She could not bear to be living on the charity of Oscar Dalrymple, and she quite believed that her mother, devoted to the care of her poultry, her birds, and her flowers, would not miss her. So the bargain was struck. "And please remember, Lady Sarah, that I come to you entirely *as* companion, prepared to fulfil all a companion's duties, and not merely as a visitor," Alice gravely said, and she meant it.

Selina was vexed when she heard of the arrangement. She went straight down to her mother's cottage, and upbraided Alice sharply. "It is lowering us all," she said to her. "A companion is next door to a servant; everybody knows that. It will be just a disgrace to the name of Dalrymple."

"Very well, Selina; then, as you think that, I will drop the name," returned Alice. "I was christened Alice Seaton, you know, after my godmother, and I will be called Miss Seaton at Lady Sarah's."

"Stuff and nonsense, child!" retorted Selina. "You may call yourself Seaton all the world over, but all the world will know still that you are Alice Dalrymple."

Alice entered upon her new home in London, and gravely told everybody in it that she wished to be called by her second name, Seaton. Lady Sarah laughed, and promised to humour her as often as she could recollect. In December, Colonel Hope formally adopted his nephew, Gerard. The young man threw up his post in the red-tape office (not at all a wise thing to do), and took up his abode with his uncle. They all went down to the Colonel's place in Gloucestershire to spend Christmas, including Frances Chenevix, who almost seemed to have been as much adopted as Gerard, so frequently was she staying with them. Christmas passed, they came to London again, and things went on smoothly and gaily until just before Easter, when a fracas occurred. Gerard Hope contrived in some way to offend the Colonel and Lady Sarah so implacably that they discarded him, and the Colonel, hot and peppery, turned him out of the house. They went again into Gloucestershire for Easter, Alice with them as companion and Frances as a guest; but not Gerard. In fact, so far as one might judge, he was discarded for ever.

The sweet month of June came round again, and the London season, as I have said, was at its height. Amidst those who were plunging headlong into its vanities was Selina Dalrymple. She had coaxed, and begged, and prayed her husband to give her just another month or two of it this year, assuring him she should die if he did not. And Oscar, though wincing at the cost, knowing well he could not and ought not to afford it, at length gave in. It appeared that he could deny her nothing.

It may be questioned, however, whether Selina enjoyed it quite as much as she had the last. The visiting and the gaiety and the homage were as captivating as ever, but she lived in a kind of terror; for Madame Damereau was pressing for the payment of her account. If *that* came to Oscar's knowledge, he would not only do to her, she hardly knew what, perhaps even box her ears, but he would be quite certain to carry her forthwith from this delightful London life to that awful prison, Moat Grange, at Netherleigh.

One afternoon Oscar was turning out of his temporary home in Berkeley Street—for they had the same rooms as last year—when he saw coming towards him a young lady who walked a little lame. It was Alice Dalrymple."

"Ah, Alice!" he cried. "Have you come to London?"

"Yes," she replied. "The Colonel is better, and we left Gloucestershire yesterday. Is Selina at home?"

"She is, for a wonder. Waiting for somebody she intends to go out with."

"How is she?"

"I cannot tell you how she is. Rather strange, it seems to me."

"Strange!"

"Take my arm, Alice, and walk with me a few paces. There's something the matter with Selina, and I cannot make it out," con-

tinued Mr. Dalrymple. "She acts for all the world as if she had committed some crime. I told her so the other day."

"Acts in what way?" cried Alice.

"She's frightened at her own shadow. When the post used to come in at the Grange she would watch for the boy, dart down the path and seize the letters, as if she feared I might read the directions of hers. When she was recovering from that fever, and I would take her letters in to her, she more than once became blanched and scared. Often I ask her questions, or address remarks to her, and she is buried in her own thoughts, and does not hear me. She starts and moans in her sleep; twice lately I have awakened in the middle of the night and found her gone from the bed and pacing the dressing-room."

"You alarm me," exclaimed Alice. "What can it be?"

"I can only suppose that her nerves are overwrought with all these follies she is plunged into. It is nothing but turmoil and excitement; turmoil and excitement from day to day. I was a fool to come here again this year, and that's the truth."

"Selina had always led so very quiet a life," murmured Alice.

"Of course she had; and it has been a wonderful change for her; enough to upset the nervous system of a delicate woman. Selina has not been too strong since she had that fever."

"She ought to keep more quiet."

"She ought; but she will not. Before we came up I told her she must not do as she did last year; and I thought she did not mean to. Alice, she is mad after these gay frivolities; worse than she was last summer, I do believe—and that need not be. I wished not to come; I told Selina why—the expense, and other reasons—but she would. She *would*, Alice. I wonder what it is that chains her mind to this Babel of a city. I hate it. Go you in and see her, Alice. I can't stay now, for I have an appointment."

Mrs. Dalrymple was in her bedroom when Alice entered, dressed, and waiting to go out: dressed with an elegance regardless of expense.

"Good gracious, child, is it you!" she exclaimed.

When the first moments of meeting had passed, Alice sat down and looked at her sister: her cheek was thin, and its brilliant bloom told more of hectic than of health.

"Selina!" exclaimed Alice, "what is the matter? You are much altered."

"Am I? People do alter. You are altered. You look ill."

"Not more so than usual," replied Alice. "I get weaker with time. But you are ill: I can see it. You look as if you had something preying on your mind."

"Nonsense, Alice. You are fanciful."

"What is it?" persisted Alice.

"If I have, your knowing it would do me no good, and would

worry you. And yet," added Mrs. Dalrymple, "I think I will tell you. I have felt lately, Alice, that I must tell somebody."

Alice laid gentle hold of her. "Let us sit down on the sofa, as we used to sit together at the Grange, when we were really sisters. But, Selina, if you have wanted a confidant in any grief, who so fit to be that as your husband?"

"He!" cried Selina—"he! It is the dread of his knowing it—the anxiety I am in, daily and hourly, to keep it from him—that is wearing me out. Sometimes I say to myself, 'What if I put an end to it all, as Robert did?'"

Alice was accustomed to the random figures of speech her sister was at moments given to use; nevertheless her heart stood still.

"What is it that you have done, Selina?"

"Ruined Oscar."

"Ruined Oscar!"

"And ruined myself with him," added Selina in a reckless tone, as she took off her bonnet with a jerk and let it lie in her lap. "I have contracted debts that neither he nor I can pay, thousands upon thousands; and the worry of it, the constant, incessant dread of discovery, is rendering my life a—I will not say what—upon earth."

"Debts! thousands upon thousands!" confusedly uttered Alice.

"It is so."

"How did you contract them? Not as—as—Robert did? Surely that infatuation is not come upon you?"

"No. But that infatuation, as you call it, is in fashion in our circles just now. I could tell you of one young lady, whom you know, who amuses herself with it pretty largely."

"A young lady!"

"She is younger than I am—but she's married," returned Selina: and the young lady in question was the Lady Adela Grubb. "My embarrassment arises from a love of pretty gowns," she added lightly; for it was not possible for Selina Dalrymple to maintain a tragic mood many minutes together. "Damereau's bill for last season was between three and four thousand pounds. It is over four thousand now."

Alice Dalrymple felt bewildered. "It is not possible for one person to owe all that in a year, Selina!"

"Not possible?" repeated Mrs. Dalrymple. "Some of my friends spend double—treble—four times what I do."

"And so their example led you on?" cried Alice presently, waking up from a whirlpool of thought.

"Something led me on. If one is in the world one must dress."

"No, Selina: not as you have done. Not to ruin. If people have but a small income they dress accordingly."

"And make a sight of themselves. I don't choose to."

"Better that, and have peace of mind," remarked Alice.

"Peace of mind! Oh, I don't know where that is to be found now a-days."

"I hope you will find it, Selina. How much do you say you owe?"

"There's four thousand to Damereau, and ——"

"Who is Damereau?"

"Goodness me, Alice; if you never did spend a season in town, you ought to know who she is, without asking. Madame Damereau's the great milliner and dressmaker; everybody goes to her."

"I remember now. Lady Sarah has her things elsewhere."

"Then I owe for India shawls, and lace, and jewels, and furs and things. I owe six thousand pounds if I owe a farthing."

"What a sum!" echoed Alice, aghast. "Six thousand pounds?"

"Ay, you may well repeat it! Which of the queens was it who said that when she died the name of Calais would be found engraven on her heart? Mary, I think. Were I to die, those two words, 'six thousand,' would be found engraven on mine. They are never absent from me. I see them written up in figures in my dreams; I see them always; in the ball-room, at the opera, in the park, they are buzzing in my ears; when I wake from my troubled sleep they come rushing over me, and I start from my bed to escape them. I am not at all sure that it won't turn out to be seven thousand," candidly added Mrs. Dalrymple.

"You must have dressed in silver and gold," said poor Alice.

"No: only in things that cost it: such things as these," said Mrs. Dalrymple, pulling at her bonnet with both hands, in irritation so passionate that it was torn in two.

"Oh, pray! pray!" Alice interposed, but too late to prevent the catastrophe. "Your beautiful bonnet! Selina, it must have cost three or four guineas. What a waste!"

"Tush!" peevishly replied Mrs. Dalrymple, flinging the wrecks to the middle of the room. "A bonnet more or less—what does it matter?"

Alice sat in thought; looking very pained, very perplexed. "It appears to me that you are on a wrong course altogether, Selina. The past is past; but you might strive to redeem it."

"Strive against a whirlpool," sarcastically responded Selina.

"You are getting deeper into it: by your own admission, you are having new things every day. It is adding fuel to fire."

"I can't go naked."

"But you must have a large stock of dresses by you."

"Do you think I would appear in last year's things? I can't and I won't. You do not understand these matters, Alice."

"Then you ought not to 'appear' at all. You should have stopped at the Grange."

"As good be in a nunnery. Once you have been initiated into the delights of a London season, you can but come back to it. Fancy my stopping at that mouldy old Grange!"

"What is to be the end of all this?" lamented Alice.

"Ah, that's it! The End. One does not know, you see, how soon

it may come. I'd not so much mind if I could get all the season first. The torment of it is, that Damereau is pressing for her bill. She is throwing out hints that she can't supply me any longer on credit—and what on earth am I to do if she won't? What a shame it is that there should be so much worry in the world!"

"The greatest portion of it is of our own creating, Selina. And no worry ought to have the power very seriously to disturb our peace," the younger sister continued, in a whisper.

"Now, Alice, you are going to bring up some of those religious notions of yours! They will be lost upon me. One cannot have one's body in this world and one's heart in the next."

"Oh, yes we can," said Alice, earnestly. "We ——"

"Well, I don't suppose I am going into the next yet, unless I torment myself out of this one; so don't go on about it," was Selina's graceless reply. But as Alice rose to leave, her mood changed.

"Forgive my fractiousness, Alice; indeed, you would excuse it if you only knew how bothered and miserable I am. It makes me cross with myself and with other people."

"Ma'am," interrupted Ann, Mrs. Dalrymple's maid, "Lady Burnham is at the door, waiting for you."

"I am not going out to-day," answered her mistress, rising. "I have changed my mind."

"Oh, my patience!" uttered the maid, "what's this? Why, ma'am, it's never your bonnet?"

No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre: I fear the same may be said of woman. "Bother the bonnet," was the undignified reply of Mrs. Dalrymple, as she flung the pieces further away with her foot. Ann humbly followed them to the far-off corner, and there took them into her hands. "Reach me another bonnet," said her mistress; "I think I will go, after all. What's the use of staying indoors?"

"Which bonnet, ma'am?"

"Oh, I don't know. Bring some out."

An array of bonnets, new and costly, were displayed for Mrs. Dalrymple's difficult choice. Alice, to whom all this was as a revelation, took her departure with uplifted hands and a shrinking heart.

Mrs. Dalrymple went downstairs, and took her seat in Lady Burnham's carriage. The latter, an extremely wealthy woman, full of pleasurable excitement, imparted some particulars she had learnt of the marriage festivities about to be held in a family of their acquaintance, to which they were both invited. Lady Burnham was then on her road to Damereau's to order a suitable toilette for it, one that would eclipse everybody's but the bride's. Selina, in listening, forgot her cares: when carried out of herself by the excitement of preparing for these pomps and vanities, she generally did so forget. But only then. In the enacting of the pomps and vanities

themselves, when they were before her in all their glory, and she made one of the bedizened crowd, her nightmare would return to her; the skeleton in the closet would, at those festive times, be exceeding prominent and bare. The reader may be a philosopher, a grave old F.R.S., very learned in searching out cause and effect, and so be able to account for this. I am not.

Selina's mouth watered as she listened to Lady Burnham's description of what she meant to wear herself at the wedding, and what she recommended to Selina: and the carriage stopped at Madame Damereau's. Mrs. Dalrymple's orders were quite moderate to-day—only amounting to about ninety pounds.

Was she quite silly? the reader will ask. Well, not more so than many another thoughtless woman.

Madame Damereau took the order as politely and carefully as though Mrs. Oscar Dalrymple had been made of bank notes and gold. She knew better manners—and better policy, too—than to make any objection before others of her clientèle. But that same evening, when Selina was dressing, she was told that a lady who gave the name of Cooper wished to see her. Selina knew that there was a Mrs. Cooper in the establishment of Madame Damereau, a partner, she fancied, or book-keeper, something of that. She had seen her once or twice; a ladylike woman who had been reduced.

"Let Mrs. Cooper come up here," she said to the maid. And Mrs. Cooper entered the bedroom.

"I come from Madame Damereau's," she began, taking the chair that Selina pointed to. "She hopes ——"

"For goodness sake speak low!" interrupted Selina, in ill-concealed terror. "Mr. Dalrymple is only in his dressing-room, and I do not wish him to hear all my private affairs. These London walls are thin. She wants money, I suppose."RICHARD

"She hopes, madam, that you will make it convenient to let her have some," said Mrs. Cooper, sinking her voice to a whisper. "If it were only a few hundred pounds," she said. "That is but trifling, compared with the whole sum, which amounts now to ——"

"Oh, I know what it amounts to; I can guess it, near enough," hastily interposed Mrs. Dalrymple. "In the course of a week or two I will see what I can do."

Poor Selina, at her wits' end for excuses, had said "in the course of a week or two" so many times now, that Madame Damereau was tired of hearing the phrase.

Mrs. Cooper hesitated, not much liking her errand. "She bade me say, madam, that she was extremely sorry to cause inconvenience, but that she cannot execute the order you gave to-day unless she previously receives some money."

"Not execute it!" repeated Selina, with flashing eyes. "What do you mean by saying such a thing to me?"

"Madam, I am but the agent of Madame Damereau. I can only speak as she bids me."

"True," answered Selina, softening; "it is not your fault. But I must have the things. You will get them for me, will you not?" she said, in an accent of entreaty, feeling that she was speaking to a gentlewoman, although one who but held a situation at a milliner's. "Oh, pray use your influence! get her to let me have them."

Mrs. Cooper stood in distress, for hers was one of those refined spirits that cannot bear to cause, or to witness, pain. "If it depended upon me, indeed you should have them," she answered, "but I have no influence of that nature with Madame Damereau. She would not allow the slightest interference between her and her ladies: were I to attempt it I might lose my place in her house, and be turned out again to struggle with the world."

"Has it been a harsh world to you?" inquired Selina, pityingly.

"Oh, yes," was Mrs. Cooper's answer, "or I should not be where I am now. And I am thankful to be there," she hastily added: "I would not seem ungrateful for the mercy that has followed me in my misfortunes."

"I think misfortunes are the lot of all," spoke Selina. "What can I do to induce Madame Damereau to furnish me with these things?"

"Perhaps you had better call and see her yourself, madam," replied Mrs. Cooper, relapsing into her ostensible position. "I will try and say a word to her to-night that may prepare her. She has a good heart."

"I will see her to-morrow. Thank you," replied Mrs. Dalrymple, ringing for Mrs. Cooper to be shown out.

Selina finished dressing and went forth to the evening's gaiety with what spirits she had. On the following day she proceeded to Madame Damereau's at an early hour, before any other of the clientèle would be likely to appear. But the interview, although Mrs. Cooper had said as much as she dared, was not productive of good. Madame had gradually learnt the true position of Oscar Dalrymple, that he was a very poor man instead of a rich one; she feared she might have trouble over her amount, and was obstinate and obdurate. Not exactly insolent: she was never that, to her customers' faces: but she and Mrs. Dalrymple both lost their temper, and the latter was impolitic enough to say some cutting things, not only in disparagement of Madame's goods, but about the "cheating prices" she had been charged. Madame Damereau's face turned green, and the interview ended by her stating that if some money was not immediately furnished her, she should sue Mr. Dalrymple for the whole. Selina went away sick at heart; for she read determination on the incensed lips of the Frenchwoman.

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY ADELA.

"How sly Mary has been!"

The above exclamation spoken by Lady Adela Grubb in a kind of resentful tone, as she read a letter while sipping her coffee, caused her husband to look up. He sat at the opposite end of the breakfast table, attractive with its silver and its flowers and its beautiful Worcester china.

"Are you speaking of your sister Mary?" he asked. "What has she done?"

Any answer to this question Lady Adela did not condescend to give. Unless the tossing of the letter across the table to him could be called one—and she did it with a gesture of scorn. The letter, a short one, came from Miss Upton, of Court Netherleigh.

"MY DEAR ADELA,—I have a little business to transact in London to-morrow, and will take luncheon with you at one o'clock, if quite convenient. Tell your husband, with my kind regards, that I hope to see him also—if he can spare an hour from that exacting place of his, Leadenhall Street. So I am to have your sister Mary as a neighbour, after all!—Your sincere friend,

"MARGERY UPTON."

"Which means, I presume, that Mary is to marry Cleveland," remarked Mr. Grubb, as he read the concluding sentence.

"Stupid thing! I told her weeks ago she was flirting with him."

"Nay, not flirting, Adela. Cleveland is not capable of that."

Adela tossed her head. How lovely she looked! fair as the fresh summer morning.

"She was flirting, though. And he would flirt if he were not too old. Parsons, as a rule, flirt more than laymen. She must be hard up for a husband to take *him*. He has a house full of children!"

"I daresay she likes him," said Mr. Grubb.

"Oh, nonsense! One only point could be urged in his favour—that he is a patrician."

"That he is what?" cried Mr. Grubb, who was drinking his coffee at the moment, and did not hear the word.

"A patrician. Not a plebeian."

The offensive stress laid by Adela on the last word, the marked scorn sitting on her lips, brought a flush to her husband's brow. Nothing seemed to afford her so much gratification as the throwing out these lance-shafts to Mr. Grubb, on what she was pleased to term his plebeian origin.

"Do you wish for more coffee?" she asked, ungraciously.

"No. I have not time for it. I must make the best of my way into the city if I am to get back to luncheon."

"There is not the least necessity for you to get back," was her slighting remark. "You will not be missed if you don't come."

"By yourself, no. I am aware of that. But I do not care to be so lacking in common courtesy as to disregard the expressed wish of Miss Upton."

"She may have expressed it out of mere politeness."

"Miss Upton is not one to express a wish out of mere politeness," replied Mr. Grubb, as he gathered up some papers of his that were by the side of his plate. "Besides, I shall like to see her."

Approaching his wife, who had taken up the *Morning Post*, he stood over her. "Good-bye, Adela," he said; and bent to kiss her cheek.

"Oh, good-bye," she retorted, in a curt tone, and jerked her cheek away from his very lips.

He went away with a suppressed sigh. This line of treatment had been dealt out to him so long now that he had become inured to it. It was none the less bitter, though, for that.

Adela, dropping the newspaper and picking up a rose from one of the glasses on the breakfast-table, went to the window to see whether it looked very hot, for she wanted to walk to her mother's and hear about Mary's contemplated marriage. She saw her husband cross the square. For some reason he was crossing it on foot, his close carriage slowly following him: on very hot days he rarely used an open one. What a fine, noble-looking man he was! what a face of goodness and beauty was his!—how few could compare with him. At odd moments this would even strike Adela; it struck her now; and a flash of something like pride in him darted into her heart.

Ah! she saw now why he had walked across the square instead of getting into his carriage at the door: her father was advancing towards him. The two met, shook hands, stood for a few moments talking, and then Lord Acorn put his arm within his son-in-law's, and they turned the corner together.

"Papa wants more money of him," thought Adela. "It's rather too bad, I must say. But that Leadenhall Street is just a mine of wealth."

For now and again, ever since the marriage, Lord Acorn had come with his troubles and embarrassments to Mr. Grubb, who seldom refused to assist him.

As the clock was striking one that day, they sat down to lunch: Miss Upton, who had just arrived, Mr. Grubb, and Lady Adela. Miss Upton never took the meal later if she could help it. Indeed, at home she took it at twelve. Her breakfast hour was eight precisely, and by twelve she was ready for luncheon. Lady Acorn came in as they were sitting down, threw her bonnet on a chair, and sat down with them. Hearing that Miss Upton would be there, she had come, uninvited, to meet her.

"How early you went out, mamma!" cried Adela, in rather an aggrieved tone. For, when she reached Chenevix House that

morning, she found her mother and sisters had already left it: so that she had heard no particulars at all about Lady Mary's proposed wedding, not even whether there was certainly to be one, and Adela had her curiosity upon the subject.

"We went shopping," answered Lady Acorn. "One likes to do that before the heat of the day comes on. Do you know that Mr. Cleveland is going to marry again, Margery?" she added abruptly, looking across the table at Miss Upton.

"Yes, I knew it. He came to the Court yesterday morning to tell me of it. I think Mary will make him a good wife."

"She has courage," said Mr. Grubb, with a pleasant laugh. "How many children are there?—Ten?"

"No. Eight. And they are of all ages; from seven, up to four-and-twenty," added Miss Upton.

Lady Acorn was nodding her head, in emphatic acquiescence to Mr. Grubb's remark. "I told Mary she had the courage of Job, when the thing first came to my ears. Eight children and a poor country rector! Young women are ready to marry a broomstick when they get to Mary's age, if the chance falls in their way."

"Had Job so much courage, mamma?" put in Adela.

"Courage, or patience, or some such virtue. It is not I that would have taken an old widower with a flock of young ones," continued the Countess, in her plain-speaking tartness.

"You will get rid of us all in time, mamma," observed Adela.

"It entails trouble enough," was her mother's ungracious rejoinder. "I am quite done over with heat and fatigue now—going about from one place to another after Mary's things. Gowns and bonnets and slips and mantles, and all the rest of it! Girls are so exacting when they are going to marry: they must have this and they must have that, and Mary is no exception. One would think she had picked up a duke."

"It is natural they should be," observed Miss Upton.

"But it's not the less ridiculous," retorted the Countess. "One thing I must say—that Tom Cleveland is showing himself in desperate haste to take another wife."

"The haste is for his children's sake," said Miss Upton; "be very sure of that, Betsy. 'I must have some one to control and train them; since my poor wife's death the girls have run wild,' he said to me yesterday, when he told me about Mary, and the tears were almost running down his cheeks."

"It is a great charge," spoke Mr. Grubb. "I mean for Lady Mary."

"It is," acquiesced Miss Upton. "But I hope—I think—she will be found equal to it, and will prove a good stepmother. That she understands the responsibility she is undertaking, and has counted the cost, I am sure of, by what she said in a long letter I received from her this morning."

"It is to be hoped she will have no children of her own," struck

in Lady Acorn. "Many a woman makes a good stepmother until her own babies come. After that ——"

"After that—what?" asked Miss Upton, for Lady Acorn had stopped abruptly.

"After that, she thinks of her own children and not of the first wife's. And sometimes the poor things get hardly dealt by."

"And when is the wedding-day to be?" asked Adela.

"The day after twelve months shall have elapsed since the death of the first Mrs. Cleveland; or in as short a time subsequent to that day as may be convenient to me and the milliners," laughed Lady Acorn.

"That will make it sometime in August, mamma?"

"Yes, in August."

"Adela, you must give them a substantial present—something worth having," said Mr. Grubb to his wife.

"Is Damereau to furnish the wedding dresses?" questioned Adela, ignoring her husband's remark rather too pointedly, and addressing her mother.

"Damereau!" shrieked the Countess. "Not if I know it. We have been to plain Mrs. Wilson. Damereau gets dearer every day. She is all very well for those who have a long purse: mine's a short one."

At the close of the luncheon, Miss Upton said she must take her departure; she had commissions to do. A fly waited for her at the door.

"You should use one of Adela's carriages," said Mr. Grubb, as he took her down to it.

"Ah, thank you; I know you and she would lend it to me with hearty good-will; but I like, you see, to be independent," was Miss Upton's answer. "I have employed the same fly and the same man for years. When I am coming to London I write to him previously, and he holds himself at my services for the day."

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Mr. Grubb, as he placed her comfortably in the closed fly.

"Nothing. Unless you will get in and ride a little way with me. I am going first to a shop in the Strand. Perhaps you can't spare the time."

"Indeed I can," he answered, stepping in and taking the seat facing her. "The Strand will be all in my way to Leadenhall Street."

They had not seen much of one another, and yet they were intimate, for each liked the other. Mr. Grubb had paid one short visit to Court Netherleigh with his wife; it was in the first year of his marriage, and they stayed three days. Miss Upton called on them sometimes when she came to town, perhaps once or twice a year; and that was all.

"You were saying something to Adela about giving a present to her sister," began Miss Upton, as they ambled along. "I take it that you were sincere."

"Indeed I was. I should like to give them something that will be useful—regardless of cost," he added, with a smile. "Can you suggest anything?"

"I can. A little open-carriage and pony—if you would like to go as far as that. Mary will want it badly. The old pony-carriage, used by Mrs. Cleveland all her married life to get about the straggling parish in, is the most worn, ramshackle thing now you ever saw; it will hardly hold together. And the poor pony is on its last legs."

"They shall have a new one. Thank you for telling me," added Mr. Grubb, with a sunny smile.

"And I daresay you wonder why I can't give them this thing myself," resumed Miss Upton; "but the truth is—don't laugh—I am refurnishing the house, and I don't like to do too much. It would look ostentatious, patronising, and Cleveland would feel it so in his heart. I had a rare battle with him about the furniture, when I told him what I meant to do; I had already, in fact, given orders for it. 'You cannot bring Lady Mary home to that shabby dining and drawing-room of yours, Thomas Cleveland, with their chipped and worn chairs and tables, and their dirty walls,' I said to him yesterday. 'I fear I can't afford to have them renovated,' he answered me, his face taking a long look. 'Of course you can't,' I said, 'whoever heard of a parson that could; I mean to do it myself.' Well, then we had a fight. Mary had seen the rooms and knew what they were, he maintained. Upon which I cut short the argument by saying the orders were already given, and the workmen ready to go in. I had seen for a month or two past, you must understand, Francis, how matters were turning between him and Mary Chenevix."

Miss Upton broke off with a short laugh. "The idea of my calling you Francis!" she exclaimed. "Will you forgive me?"

"*Forgive* you! Dear Miss Upton, if you only knew how pleasant to me the name sounds from your lips!"

"When I think of you it is generally as *Francis* Grubb, and so it escaped me. Well, then, you will give them this new pony and carriage?"

"I will. And thank you sincerely for suggesting it."

"Does Adela make you a good wife yet?" cried Miss Upton, fixing her keen eyes upon him. And Francis Grubb, at the abrupt query, grew red to the very roots of his waving hair.

"Is she becoming affectionate to you, as a gracious wife should be?" pursued Miss Margery, for he did not answer.

"I do not complain of my wife; please understand that, Miss Upton."

"Quite right of you not to. But I believe I understand rather more than appears on the surface; have understood for some time past. I gave her a lecture when I was last here. I did, indeed; though you may not suppose it."

He smiled. A poor smile at best. Margery Upton leaned forward and put her hand upon his hand, that lay on his knee.

"There is only one thing for it—patience. Bear quietly. Adela used to be a sweet girl; I think she has a good heart, and what evil spirit has taken possession of her I cannot conceive. I *think* things will work round in time, even as you could desire them."

"Ay!"

"And, for the present, I say, keep up a good heart—and *bear*. It is my best advice to you."

He took her hand within both his, and pressed it fervently, making no comment in words. And just then the fly pulled up in the Strand.

"I have not asked about your mother," said Miss Upton, as he stood at the door to say farewell after getting out.

"She is pretty well, thank you, now."

"And your sister? Does she get over that wretched business of Robert Dalrymple's?"

"Of course—in a degree. Time softens most things. But she will never forget him."

He shook hands finally with Miss Upton; he walked on to his house in Leadenhall Street, his step flagging, his heart weary. Entering his own private room, he found two ladies within it. His mother, who was seated in the most easy chair the room afforded; and his sister. Mrs. Lynn was a tall, dignified, upright woman still: her beautiful gray eyes were just like his own, her refined countenance, sickly now, bore yet its marks of unusual intellect.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "How glad I am to see you!"

"I drove up to the Bank upon a little matter of business, and came on to see you after it was transacted," she explained, as he kissed her. "It is unusual to find you out at this time of day, Francis; but the clerks thought you would be in soon, and I waited. I am glad of the rest; the journey has so tired me."

"Why will you not let me do your matters of business for you, mother?" he tenderly asked, as he busied himself to get a glass of wine for her and some biscuits.

"Because as long as I *can* do things for myself, I like to do them," she answered, "and my old-fashioned carriage is an easy one. I do not care to become quite the incapable old woman before the necessity for it sets inevitably in. And now, how is it with yourself, Francis? Your brow wore a troubled look as you entered."

Never did Francis Grubb smile a more genial smile than now. Not even to his mother would he willingly show his care. "It is quite well with me," he laughed; "well and flourishing. Drink your wine, mother dear."

"Your wife?" whispered Mrs. Lynn in a tone of doubt—of pain. "Is she—more friendly?"

Oh, we are friendly enough—quite so,” he lightly answered, angry with himself for not being able to suppress the flush that rose at the question. “Is that a new dress you have on, Mary? It is marvellously pretty.”

“If her child had but lived!” sighed Mrs. Lynn, alluding to Lady Adela.

“Quite new; on new to-day; and I am very glad you admire it,” gaily answered Mary, as she spread out the dress with both hands, and turned herself about on her brother’s dull red carpet for inspection. She was as thankful to drown the other subject as he was: she knew, unhappily, more about it than her mother. “I am going out on a visit, sir, so of course I must have some pretty things.”

“Going where?”

“To Lawn Cottage, at Netherleigh. Mrs. Dalrymple wants me—she is lonely there. I can only spare her a week though; it will not do to leave mamma for longer. Alice is at Lady Sarah Hope’s, you know, and Selina is in town, the gayest of the gay.”

“Rather too gay, I fancy,” remarked Mr. Grubb. “Mother,” he added, turning from his sister, “I have just left your friend of early life—Miss Upton. She enquired after you.”

“Very good of her!” retorted Mrs. Lynn, proudly and stiffly. “I do not care to be spoken to of Margery Upton, as you know, Francis. She—and others—voluntarily severed all connection between us in those early years. It pained me more than you, or anyone else, will ever know; but it is over and done with, and I do not willingly recall it, or them, to my memory.”

Ah! that separation might have brought keen pain to Mrs. Lynn in early days, but not so cruelly keen as the pain something else was bringing to her son in these later ones. As Francis Grubb, his visitors departed, took his place at his desk, and strove to apply his mind to his business, he found it difficult. Twice to-day had his wife’s behaviour to him been remarked upon—by Miss Upton and by his mother. Was it, could it be the fact, that the unhappiness of his home, the miserable relations obtaining between himself and his wife, had become patent to all the world? The draught had already been rising to a pretty good height in his cup of bitterness; this would fill it to the brim.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAY OF RECKONING.

“WHAT an idiot I have been!” soliloquised Selina Dalrymple. “And what a cat that Damereau is!”

The above pretty speech—not at all suitable for pretty lips—was given vent to by Mrs. Oscar Dalrymple on her return from that morning visit to her milliner, when the latter had wholly refused to listen to reason, and both had lost their courtesy.

Her dainty bonnet tossed on the bed, her little black lace mantle on the back of her low dressing-chair, Selina, who had come straight home, swayed herself backwards and forwards in the said chair, as she mentally ran over the items of the keen words just exchanged between herself and Madame, and wondered what in the world she was to do.

"If I had but kept my temper!" she thought, in self-reproach. "It was always a fault of mine to be quick and fiery—like poor Robert. It was nothing but that which made her so angry. What on earth would become of me if she should do as she says—send the account to Oscar?"

Selina started up at the thought. Calmly equable to a rather remarkable degree in general, she was one of the most restless of human beings when she did give way to excitement. Just as Robert had been.

"If he had but lived!" she cried, tears filling her eyes as her thoughts reverted to her brother, "I could have taken this trouble to him, and he would have settled it. Robert was so generous!"

But Selina quite forgot to recall the fact that her brother's income, at the best, would not have been larger than her husband's was. Not quite as large, indeed, for Oscar had his own small patrimony of six or seven hundred a year in addition. Just now she could not be expected to remember common sense.

"How is this woman to be pacified?" she resumed, her reflections reverting to Madame Damereau. "What a fool I was to provoke her! Two or three hundred pounds might do it for the present. Where am I to get them? If she carries out this dreadful threat and appeals to Oscar, what should I do? What *could* I do? And all the world would know—Oh!" she shivered, "I must stop that. I must get some from him, if I can. I will try at once. Ugh; what a calamity the want of money is!"

She descended the stairs and entered the dining-room, where her husband was. He sat at the table, writing letters, and seemed to be in the midst of business and accounts.

"Oscar!"

He looked up. "What is it?"

"Oscar," she said, advancing and standing close to him, "can you let me have a little money?"

"No, that I can't, Selina. I am settling up a few payments now, and can only do it by halves. Others I am writing to put off entirely for the present."

He had bent over his writing again, as if the question, being answered, was done with.

"Oscar, I must have it."

"What money do you mean? Some for housekeeping? I can let you have that."

"No, no: for myself. I want—I want—two hundred pounds,"

she said, jerking it out. She did not dare to say three, her courage failed her.

He put down the pen and turned towards her in displeasure. "Selina, I told you before we came to town that I could not have these calls made upon me, as I had last year. You know how very small our income is, and you know that your extravagance has already crippled it. The allowance I make you is greater than I can afford. I cannot give you more."

"Oh, Oscar, I must have it," she exclaimed in excitement, terrified at the aspect her situation presented to her, for her mind was apt to be imaginative. "Indeed, I must—even at an inconvenience. But two hundred pounds!"

"To squander away in folly?"

"No. If it were only to squander away, I might do without it; and I cannot do without this."

Mr. Dalrymple looked keenly at her, and she turned from his gaze. "Let me know what you want it for, that I may judge of the necessity you speak of. If it is not convenient to you to tell me, Selina, you must be satisfied with my refusal."

"Well, then," she said, seeing no help for the avowal, "I owe it."

"Owe it! Owe two hundred pounds! *You!*"

So utter was his astonishment, so blank his dismay, that Selina's heart failed her. If her owing two hundred thus impressed him, what would become of her when he learnt the whole truth!

"And I am pressed for it," she faintly added. "*Please* let me have it, Oscar."

"What have you gone in debt for?"

"Various things," she answered, not caring to avow particulars. But he looked steadfastly at her, waiting for the truth. "Dress."

"The compact between us was that you should not run in debt," he said, in a severe tone; "you promised to make your allowance do. You have behaved ill to me, Selina."

She bent her head, feeling that she had. Oh, feeling it terribly, just then.

"Is this all you owe? All?"

"Y—es." But the falsehood, as falsehoods ought to, left a tremor on her lips.

Without speaking another word, he unsealed a paper in which were enclosed some bank notes, and handed several to her, to the amount of two hundred pounds. "Understand me well, Selina, this must never occur again," he said in an impressive tone. "These notes had a different and an urgent destination."

"What a goose I was, not to ask for the other hundred!" was her mental comment, as she escaped from the room. "It is not of the least use offering Damereau two hundred; but she might take three. And where am I to get it?"

Where, indeed? Did the reader ever try when in extremity to

borrow a hundred pounds, or what not?—and does he remember how very hopeless a case it seemed when present before him? Just as it appeared now to Selina Dalrymple.

“I wonder whether Alice could lend it me?” she cried, swaying her foot helplessly as she sat in the low chair. “It’s not in the least likely, but I might ask her.—Who’s this?”

The Who’s this, applied to a footstep on the stairs. It was her husband’s. Some tiresome, troublesome old man of their acquaintance had come up from Netherleigh, and Oscar wanted his wife to help entertain him. Remembering the two hundred pounds just procured from Oscar, she did not like to refuse, and went down.

It was evening before she could get to Lady Sarah Hope’s. Alice, looking ill, was alone in the drawing-room, having begged to be excused going down to dinner. On a table in the back room lay some of Lady Sarah’s jewels; valuable gems. Selina privately wished they were hers. She had to take her departure as she came, for Alice could not help her.

Nothing further could be done that evening, and Selina went to rest betimes—eleven o’clock—disappointing two or three entertainments that were languishing for her presence: but she had no heart that night.

To rest! It was a mockery of the word. She passed the night turning and tossing from side to side; and when morning came, and she arose, it was with trembling limbs and a fevered brain.

Her whole anxiety was to make up this money, three hundred pounds; hoping that it would prove a stop-gap for the milliner, and stave off that dreaded threat of application to Oscar. What was to come, afterwards, and how in the world further stop-gaps would be supplied, she did not now glance at. That evil seemed a hundred miles off, compared with this.

A faint idea had been looming through her mind: possibly led to by what she had seen at Lady Sarah Hope’s. At the commencement it had neither shape nor form, but by mid-day it had acquired one, and was entertained. She had heard of such things as pledging jewels: she was sure she had heard that even noble ladies, driven to a pinch, so disposed of them. Mrs. Dalrymple locked her bedroom door, reached out her ornaments, and laid them in a heap on the bed.

She began to estimate their value: she reckoned up what they had cost to buy: as nearly as she could remember and judge, it amounted to full five hundred pounds. She supposed she might be able to borrow four hundred upon them: and she decided to do it. Some of them had belonged to her mother. Then, if that cormorant of a French *marchande de modes* refused to be pacified with a small sum, she should have a larger one to offer her. Yes, and get the things for the wedding breakfast besides.

The relief this determination brought to the superficial mind of Selina Dalrymple, few, never reduced to a similar strait, can picture.

It almost removed her weight of care. The task of pledging them would not be a pleasant one, but she must go through with it. The glittering trinkets were still upon the bed when someone knocked at the room door. She grew scared and terrified ; for a troubled conscience sees shadows where no shadows are ; and hers whispered that curious eyes, looking on those ornaments, must divine what she meant to do with them. With a hasty hand she threw a dress upon the bed, and then another upon the first, and then a heavy one over all. The glittering jewels were hidden now.

Oscar Dalrymple was thinking profoundly as he sat over his after-dinner wine, not that he ever took much, and the street lamps were lighted, when a figure, looking as little like Mrs. Dalrymple as possible, stole out of the house ; stole stealthily, and closed the door stealthily behind her, so that neither master nor servant should hear it. She had ransacked her wardrobe for a plain gown and dark shawl, and her straw bonnet might have served as a model for a Quaker's. She had been out in the afternoon, and marked the place she meant to go to. A renowned establishment in its line, and respectable, even Selina knew that. She hurried along the streets, not unlike a criminal : had she been going to rob the warerooms of their jewels, instead of offering some to add to their hidden stock, she could not have felt more guilty. When she reached the place she could not make up her mind to enter : she took a turn or two in front, she glanced in at its door, at the window crowded with goods. She had never been in a pawnbroker's shop in her life, and her ideas of its customers were vague : comprising gentlewomen in distress, gliding in as she was ; tipsy men carrying their watches in their hand ; poor objects out of work, in dilapidated shirt-sleeves ; and half-starved women with pillows and flat-irons. It looked quiet, inside ; so far as she could see, there did not appear to be a soul. With a desperate effort of resolution she went in.

She stood at the counter, the chief part of the shop being hidden from her. A dark man came forward.

"What can we do for you, ma'am ?"

"Are you the master ?" inquired Selina.

"No."

"I wish to see him."

Another presently appeared : a respectable-looking, well-dressed man, of good manners.

"I am in temporary need of a little money, and wish to borrow some upon my jewels," began Mrs. Dalrymple, in a hoarse whisper ; and she was really so agitated as scarcely to know what she said.

"Are they of value ?" he inquired.

"Some hundreds of pounds. I have them with me."

He requested her to walk into a private room, and placed a chair. She sat down and laid the jewels on the table. He examined

them in silence, one after another, not speaking until he had gone through the whole.

"What did you wish to borrow on them?"

"As much as I can," replied Mrs. Dalrymple. "I thought about four hundred pounds."

"Four hundred pounds!" echoed the pawnbroker. "Madam, they are not worth, for this purpose, more than a quarter of the money."

She stared at him in astonishment. "They are real."

"Oh yes. Otherwise, they would not be worth so many pence."

"Many of them are new within twelve months," urged Selina.

"Altogether, they cost more than five hundred pounds."

"To buy. But they are not worth much to pledge. The fashion of these ornaments changes with every season: and that, for one thing, diminishes their value."

"What could you lend me on them?"

"One hundred pounds."

"Absurd!" returned Mrs. Dalrymple, her cheeks flushing. "Why, that one set of amethysts alone cost more. I could not let them go for that. One hundred would be of no use to me."

"Madam, it is entirely at your option, and I assure you I do not press it," he answered, with courteous respect. "We care little about taking these things in; so many are brought to us now, that our sales are glutted with them."

"You will not be called upon to sell these. I shall redeem them."

The jeweller did not answer. He could have told her that never an article, from a service of gold plate to a pair of boy's boots, was pledged to him yet, but it was quite sure to be redeemed—in intention.

"Are you aware that a great many ladies, even of high degree, now wear false jewellery?" he resumed.

"No, indeed," she returned. "Neither should I believe it."

"Nevertheless, it is so. And the chief reason is the one I have just mentioned: that in the present day the rage for ornaments is so great, and the fashion of them so continually changing, that to be *in* the fashion, a lady must spend a fortune in ornaments alone. I give you my word, madam, that in the fashionable world a great deal of the jewellery now worn is false; though it may pass, there, unsuspected. And this fact deteriorates from the value of real stones, especially for the purpose of pledging."

He began, as he spoke, to put the articles into their cases again, as if the negotiation were at an end.

"Can you lend me two hundred pounds upon them?" asked Mrs. Dalrymple, after a blank pause.

He shook his head. "I can advance you what I have stated, if you please; not a pound more. And I feel sure you will not be able to obtain more on them anywhere, madam, take them where you will."

"But what am I to do?" returned she, betraying some excitement. Very uselessly: but that room was no stranger to it.

The jeweller was firm, and Mrs. Dalrymple gathered up her ornaments, her first feeling of despair lost in anger. She was leaving the room with her parcel when it occurred to her to ask herself, in sober truth, *WHAT* she was to do—how procure the remainder of the sum necessary to appease Madame Damereau. She turned back, and finally left the shop without her jewels, but with a hundred pounds in her pocket, and her understanding considerably enlightened as to the relative value of a jewel to buy and a jewel to pledge.

Now it happened that, if Mrs. Dalrymple had repented showing her temper to Madame Damereau, that renowned artiste had equally repented showing hers to Mrs. Dalrymple. She feared it might tell against her with her customers, if it came to be known: for she knew how popular Selina was: truth to say, she liked her herself. Madame came to the determination of paying Mrs. Dalrymple a visit, not exactly to apologise, but to soothe away certain words. And to qualify the pressing for some money, which she meant to do (whether she got it or not), she intended to announce that the articles ordered for the wedding festivities would be supplied. "It's only ninety pounds, more or less," thought Madame, "and I suppose I shall get the money some time."

She reached Mrs. Dalrymple's in the evening, soon after that lady had departed on her secret expedition to the pawnbroker. Their London lodgings were confined. The dining-room had Mr. Dalrymple in it, so Madame Damereau was shown to the drawing-room, and the maid went hunting about the house for her mistress.

Whilst she was on her useless search, Mr. Dalrymple entered the drawing-room, expecting to find it tenanted by his wife. Instead of that, some strange lady sat there, who rose at his entrance, made him a swimming curtsy, the like of which he had never seen in a ball-room, and threw off some rapid sentences in an unknown tongue.

His perplexed look stopped her. "Ah," she said, changing her language, "Monsieur, I fear, does not speak the French. I have the honour, I believe, of addressing Mr. Dalreemp. I am covered with contrition at intruding at this evening hour, but I know that Mrs. Dalreemp is much out in the day; I thought I might perhaps get speech of her as she was dressing for some *soirée*."

"Do you wish to see her? Have you seen her?" asked he.

"I wait now to see her," replied Madame.

"Another of these milliner people, I suppose," thought Oscar to himself, with not at all a polite word in connection with the supposition. "Selina's mad to have the house beset with them; it's like a swarm of flies. If she comes to town next year, may I be shot."

"Ann! tell your mistress she is wanted," he called out, opening the door.

"I can't find my mistress, sir," said the servant, coming down-

stairs. "I thought she must be in her room, but she is not. I am sure she is not gone out, because she said she meant to have a quiet evening at home to-night, and she did not dress."

"She is somewhere about," said Mr. Dalrymple. "Go and look for her."

Madame Damereau had been coming to the rapid conclusion that this was an opportunity she should do injustice to herself to omit using. And as Mr. Dalrymple was about to leave her to herself, she stopped him.

"Sir—pardon me—but now that I have the happiness to see you, I may ask if you will not use your influence with Mrs. Dalreemp to think of my account. She does promise so often, so often, and I get nothing. I have my heavy payments to make, and sometimes I do not know where to find the money: though, if you saw my books, your hairs would bristle, sir, at the sums owing to me."

"You are ——?"

"I am Madame Damereau. If Mrs. Dalreemp would but give me a few hundred pounds off her bill, it would be something."

A few hundred pounds! Oscar Dalrymple wondered what she meant. He looked at her for some moments before he spoke.

"What is the amount of my wife's debt to you, Madame?"

"Ah, it is —— but I cannot tell it you quite exactly: there are recent items. The last note that went in to her was four thousand three hundred and twenty-two pounds."

He had an impassible face, rarely showing emotion. It had probably not been moved to it half a dozen times in the course of his life. But now his lips gradually drew into a straight thin line, and a red spot shone in his cheek.

"WHAT did you say? Do you speak of the account?"

"It was four thousand three hundred and twenty-two pounds," equably answered Madame, who was not familiar with his countenance. "And there have been a few trifles since, and her last order this week will come to ninety pounds. If you wish for it exactly, sir," added Madame, seizing at an idea of hope, "I will have it sent to you when I go home. Mrs. Dalreemp has the details up to very recently."

"Four thousand pounds!" repeated Mr. Dalrymple, sitting down, in a sort of helpless manner. "When could she have contracted it?"

"Last season, sir, chiefly. A little in the winter she had sent down to her, and she has had things this spring: not so many."

He did not say more, save a mutter which Madame could not catch. She understood it to be that he would speak to Mrs. Dalrymple. The maid returned, protesting that her mistress was not in the house and must have changed her mind and gone out: and Madame Damereau, thinking she might have gone out for the evening, and that it was of no use waiting, made her adieu to Mr. Dalrymple, with the remarkable curtesy more than once repeated.

He was sitting there still, in the same position, when his wife appeared. She had entered the house stealthily, as she had left it, had taken off her things, and now came into the room ready for tea, as if she had only been upstairs to wash her hands. Scarcely had she reached the middle of the room, when he rose and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder. His face, as she turned to him in alarm, with its drawn aspect, its mingled pallor and hectic, was so changed that she could hardly recognise it for his.

"Oscar, you terrify me!" she cried out.

"What debts are these that you owe?" he asked, from between his parted lips.

Was the dreaded moment come, then! A low moan escaped her.

"Four thousand and some hundred pounds to Damereau the milliner! How much more to others?"

"Oh, Oscar, if you look and speak like that, you will kill me."

"I ask how much more?" he repeated, passing by her words as the idle wind. "Tell me the truth, or I shall feel tempted to thrust you from my home, and advertise you."

She wished the carpet would open and let her in; she hid her face. Oscar held her, and repeated the question:—"How much?"

"Six thousand pounds—in all—about that. Not more, I think."

He released her then with a jerk. Selina began to cry like a school-girl.

"Are you prepared to go out and work for your living, as I must do?" he panted. "I have nothing to keep you on, and shall not have for years. If they throw me into a debtors' prison to-morrow, I cannot help it."

"Oh," shrieked silly Selina, "a prison! I'd go with you."

"I might have expected something of this when I married into your branch of the family," returned Oscar, who, in good truth, was nearly beside himself. "A mania follows it. Your uncle gambled his means away, and then took his own life; your father hampered himself with his brother's debts, and remained poor; your brother followed in his uncle's wake; and now the mania is upon you!"

"Oh, please, Oscar, please!" pleaded Selina, who had no more depth of feeling than a magpie, while Oscar had plenty of it. "I'll never never go in debt again."

"You shall never have the chance," he answered. And, there and then, Oscar Dalrymple, summoning his household, gave orders for their removal to the Grange. Selina cried her eyes out at having to quit the season and its attractions summarily.

Thus, as a wreathing cloud suddenly appears in the sky, and as suddenly fades away, had Mrs. Dalrymple, like a bright vision, appeared to the admiring eyes of the London world, and as suddenly vanished from it.

(To be continued.)

SWEET MAY.

BE glad, my heart, for I see her coming,
 A primrose chain in her waving hair ;
 A hymn of rapture her red lips humming,
 Blue violets clasped to her bosom fair.
 She bears a chalice with honey laden,
 To feast the flowers on her joyous way ;
 Breathe low the name of this beauteous maiden,
 This Heaven-born goddess, Sweet May ! Sweet May !

Her emerald robe through the valley sweeping,
 The young grass tinges with tenderest green ;
 Like flashing meteors the streams are leaping
 In giddy joy 'neath her eye's blue sheen.
 On nodding wildflower the dew is glancing,
 Down shady lanes where the children stray ;
 Like fairy banners young leaves are dancing,
 And seem to murmur " 'Tis May ! 'tis May ! "

The gleaming wealth of her perfumed tresses
 Floods hill and mountain with living gold,
 Each infant bud to her heart she presses,
 And oh, how swiftly its leaves unfold !
 A tender impulse her steps beguiling,
 She softly steals through some ruin gray,
 Whose crumbling walls, in her presence smiling,
 Resound and echo with " May ! Sweet May ! "

And though she revels in country valleys,
 And crowns the hedges with fragrant bloom,
 Her sweet breath blows through unlovely alleys,
 Through homes of sorrow, and want, and gloom.
 She bears glad tidings of summer weather
 To busy city and meadow gay ;
 So Toil and Pleasure shall sing together
 The we'coming praises of May ! Sweet May !

FANNY FORRESTER

THE SHUT-UP HOUSES.

BY ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO, AUTHOR OF "THE OCCUPATIONS OF A RETIRED LIFE," "THE MYSTERY OF DR. HARDY'S MARRIAGE," &C.

I.

EVERYBODY in the City knew these shut-up houses. They stood, in all their gaunt dreariness and desolation, on the great main thoroughfares, like loathsome beggars basking in the sunshine beside the market cross or on the palace steps.

There were many of these houses, and they did not all stand together. There were two immense buildings going to decay on Hay Hill, not three minutes' walk from the cathedral; there was another, in a busy little street in the lawyers' quarter; and there were three or four more, all in a row, at that corner of the Great South Road where it is intersected by Wharf Street. The country cousins, arriving at the railway terminus there, saw these as their first glimpse of London, and began to wonder whether the streets were likely to be paved with gold, when the buildings were allowed to moulder into dust and ashes.

Nobody seemed to remember when these houses had been in any different condition. Nobody's memory seemed to recall them as anything but shut-up houses. For years and years they had not seemed to grow more dingy or dilapidated, having long since reached that state when any change for the worse was not likely to be very apparent.

From attic to area not one pane of glass remained in the windows. The boys who had broken them must have grown into elderly men. Yet most of the windows were shuttered and barred, though here and there a heavier stone or a more vigorous throw had snapped a rusty hinge or smashed a rotten board.

If on a Sunday afternoon, or at early morning, or any other time of silence, a passer-by stood motionless opposite one of these openings, he might see a rat run across the floor of the room within, or a stray breeze stir the torn paper or loose straw which the last inhabitants had left behind them. Who were those last inhabitants? and why did they go? The houses on Hay Hill had shops to them, but the names and trades had faded quite from the signboards.

Of course there were stories about the shut-up houses. The worst of it was, there were so many of them—and each so different—that they could not all be true. It is also a melancholy fact that those shut-up houses caused a great deal of dissension among those respectable folk who are known as "the oldest inhabitants." Mr. Towers, the great grocer on Hay Hill, said they were "in Chancery,"

as if that magic phrase was quite enough to explain everything mysterious. But Mr. Brown, the baker, laughed the Chancery idea to scorn. His story was that there had been a murder committed in one of the houses, by the man who was the owner of them all, and that so he had disappeared, and could never come back to claim his property for fear the police should come down upon him.

Sam Wilks, an attorney's clerk, who wanted to be a detective, made a pilgrimage to the Great South Road, and had a gossip in the Wharf Street shops concerning the shut-up houses there. He came back highly delighted with the result of his expedition. There had been a murder done there too, down in the kitchen of the last shut-up house from the corner. There had been mysterious lights seen there more than once—and, better than all (and everybody's flesh began to creep), on a certain Christmas Eve, after dark, a boy who with a string, a dump, and a lucifer-match was fishing about in the area for a fourpenny bit he had seen there while it was daylight, had been suddenly scared by hearing a scraping, shovelling sound within, as if somebody—a ghost, of course—was digging a grave. It did not go on for many minutes, but it was quite certain he had heard something, because he stayed there till other people came, and the first two or three heard something too. Quite a crowd gathered, and were very angry because by this time there was nothing to hear: and would not disperse till the policeman made a feint of taking one man to the station-house. Then of course they followed him and forgot all about everything else.

But after Sam Wilks' delightful horrors concerning the lights and noises in the shut-up mansions in Wharf Street, the dwellers on Hay Hill began to whisper concerning things which hitherto they declared they had "kept to themselves."

First and foremost among these whisperers was Miss Wince, who lived next door to these mysterious buildings, carrying on her calling as dressmaker in a first-floor room, and retiring into private life with her apprentices in the large low attics, which, on such an eminence as Hay Hill, had a really fine sky view, and looked down on a wide landscape of red tile and gray slate. She was a great reader of romances, and bought old ones cheap. She soon put in circulation a stock of present-day rumours which speedily threw poor old Mr. Brown and his ancient legends quite into the shade.

"I know what I know," she would say, oracularly, with a pin in the corner of her mouth, "but what I've always held to is, that them who say what they know when they're sure nobody will believe 'em, is fools! (Gores are all the fashion now, ma'am, and yours is just the figure they'll suit—not like some of my ladies.) When I just mentioned what I'd heard to the doctor the other day, he said it was the wind, or rats, or a little of both! Tell me it's the wind! Tell me it's rats! Has the wind two voices? And do rats swear? I know what I know, but a poor woman earning her bread has no right

to speak. I trust I can keep myself to myself as well as any in St. Mitre's Parish, and better too, for they're a low gossiping set generally. (You shall have your dress on Saturday evening, faithful, ma'am, and don't you fidget if it's ten o'clock before it comes.)"

Now St. Mitre's, of whose parishioners Miss Wince thought so poorly, was a big church, standing on the highest part of Hay Hill. It was a handsome building, not without historical associations, for it was full of the effigies of nameless knights, and these and sundry worn-out brasses attracted a great many antiquarians to it. It also boasted some very fine old stained glass and some rich oak carving. Its incumbent was an earnest, faithful man, and as his parish was not so utterly given up to offices and warehouses as those of many City churches, St. Mitre's still possessed a fair congregation.

Myers, the beadle, made a very decent income out of the combination of his Christmas-boxes, the fees from the antiquarians, and his settled salary. Besides, he and his wife enjoyed the use of two pretty little rooms over the church porch. With the discontent common to human nature, Mrs. Myers looked upon these rooms as a very doubtful advantage.

The American ladies who came to see the chipped knights and the great poet's neglected-looking grave in the churchyard, were often asked to rest awhile in Mrs. Myers's little parlour, and they would tell her how they envied her mullioned windows and queer corner cupboards. But Mrs. Myers always answered, with a sigh, that "it was not a cheery thing to be left alone with the dead." Myers was above "all such nonsense," so that his wife had to "hide her feelings," which meant that she talked of nothing but her self-restraint from morning till night.

When the new mysteries concerning the shut-up houses began to leak out, Mrs. Myers's sufferings were intensified. She began to take "cold shivers" whenever she walked near a certain illegible memorial stone in the chancel, which rumour had somehow connected with some of the more remote dead-and-gone owners of the desolate property.

At last, one Wednesday evening, when she and her husband had chosen to retire to their own apartment during the week-night evening service, they had an argument on the subject, and Mrs. Myers, finding herself flatly contradicted, and not too politely characterised by her better half, went into violent hysterics. Her shrieks resounding through the church, two weak women in the congregation caught the subtle infection, and began to scream too, the babes brought for baptism set up a terrible roaring, and such a scene of general confusion ensued that the indignant clergyman had no resource but to stop in the middle of the prayers, and dismiss the worshippers.

And through the parish of St. Mitre's, from supper-table to supper-table, flew the report that the beadle's wife had seen the ghost of either the murderer or the murdered of the shut-up houses.

II.

"WHAT is all this about?" asked the parish doctor, Dr. Bird, of the Rev. Mr. Lane, when he met him next day walking with young Mr. Duncan, the lawyer.

"You ought to know better than I can, doctor," said the clergyman.

Dr. Bird laughed knowingly. "Then I should say it was about nothing," he remarked. "This is the recipe for the grandest uproar and mystification—a few weak women, a pound of self-deception, and an ounce of fancy."

"What do you call fancy?" asked the clergyman.

"The working of the mind in uncertain material," answered Dr. Bird, promptly.

"A good definition, I think," said Mr. Lane. "Well, do you know, I think that should have come first, and not last, in your recipe. It matters to us all, and therefore not surely least to those whom you call 'weak women,' whether our fancies be pleasant or unpleasant."

"You are not giving in to the cold shivers and the creeps and the voices, surely?" asked Dr. Bird, with something very like a sneer in his tone.

"No, certainly I am not," returned the clergyman in his quiet, dignified manner. "I think it is you who give in to them by ignoring the unpleasant and unwholesome fancies which breed them. I believe that from 'nothing comes nothing.'"

"Certainly," the doctor assented stoutly. "There can be no effect without a cause—the cause in this case being the woman's fears and weakness."

"But these, too, must have their cause for outbreak," said the clergyman. "The root of any plant is not simply the point at which the stem passes out of our sight into the ground. A deeper cause for all this uproar, Dr. Bird, is those shut-up houses."

"Tut!" cried the doctor, "if they had not one thing to frighten themselves about they would find another. I cannot understand people's minds being affected by such trifles as these houses. How do they hurt them? They are not their business. They lose nothing by them."

"You don't know what effect it might have even on you, if the sun turned black and stayed so," said the clergyman. "You are an educated man; you have read much. You move among people of similar education and mental capacity. You have travelled and have laid in a large stock of remembered scenery, which, so to speak, you can shift at pleasure for your own entertainment. But these other people have few or none of these things—their lives are confined within the narrowest limits. Now for years these miserable shut-up houses have been a centre of unhealthy curiosity and gossip. They have stimulated invention in the direction of ghastly crimes; they have filled empty and hungry imagination with a phantasmagoria

of evil spirits and malignant passions. It seems to me that you, as a scientific man, should be the very last to deny the almost irresistible power of subtle influences."

"Well, well, there may be something in what you say," assented the doctor. "But, after all, it is none of our business, and I don't see what all our wisdom can do in the matter, since these unfortunate houses are neither my patients nor your parishioners."

"If I could find out to whom they belong," said the clergyman, "I would try to bring some influence to bear in that quarter."

"Can't Mr. Duncan give us any information on that point?" asked Dr. Bird, suddenly turning to the young lawyer, who had walked silently beside them, a very attentive listener to their arguments.

Mr. Duncan smiled and shook his head, which might or might not be a polite and perfectly legal way of conveying that he did not mean to say anything.

Mr. Duncan was quite a young man, with bright, kind gray eyes, which always looked as if he was going to tell some good news. He had a fair, pale face, and that peculiar style of plain features which wear a refinement that handsome faces rarely have. Mr. Duncan was a much imposed upon man. Even a lawyer's professional reputation for astuteness and severity could not serve to keep off the crowd of intentional swindlers and natural-born "sponges" who surrounded him. Yet he was a clever lawyer, and won his clients' cases, and then could not bear to charge many of them anything except costs out of pocket. He had a great many clients, yet he often would say, "Somehow, I do not get a paying connection." How could he, when he had not the heart to make it pay?

Mr. Duncan was certainly not making his fortune; but he was paying his way, and as his constant prayer was that "he might die in harness," he looked forward hopefully, had always a merry word on his lips, and thought the world such a bright and pleasant place, that he was accustomed to say he could realize heaven best by thinking of it as something just better than earth. His favourite hymn was Bonar's "Meeting Place," and he had a special mark set against the lines

"Loving on, unchilled, unhindered,
Loving once, and evermore."

Mr. Duncan's house was kept by a maiden aunt. She loved him, she spoiled him, and to his face she called him a fool, well knowing that she would not have loved him half so well had he been other than he was.

The moment Dr. Bird tried to draw him into the conversation he paused, looked at his watch, and remarking that he had an appointment at a certain court within the hour, he shook hands with his two companions and hastened away.

"He knows a good deal about the property hereabouts," said Mr. Lane, "but there doesn't seem much to be drawn from him."

"Perhaps there isn't much to draw," returned the doctor. "Poor fellow!"

"Why 'poor fellow'?" asked the clergyman. "I don't see why he is to be pitied, Doctor?"

"Don't you?" said the doctor. "Well, I hate looking at one's neighbours in a professional way, but sometimes one cannot help it. He is as fine a case of phthisis as ever I saw—every symptom marked. He has one foot in the grave, Mr. Lane, no matter how long he takes before he puts in the other."

"Dear me," answered the clergyman. "I thought he looked delicate, but then he is always in such spirits: why, he is one of the gayest and most hopeful men I know."

"That's one of the symptoms," said the doctor.

At that moment somebody tapped the clergyman on the shoulder. It was Mr. Duncan come back again. Dr. Bird started, and rather uneasily reflected that it was impossible he could have overheard anything. The young lawyer's face was even more bright and eager than usual.

"Have you never heard the slightest rumour, Mr. Lane," he asked, "to whom these empty houses belong? I ask you in the first instance, because as you say you have been interested in this side of the matter, you have probably made some inquiries yourself."

"It is easy for me to tell you all I know," replied Mr. Lane. "I was told that the person who makes herself responsible for these houses when absolutely compelled to do so, is a poor old woman living in Wharf Street—near the other shut-up houses, you understand. I don't know who has seen her, but nobody can fathom whose agent she is, and I should not think it at all unlikely that she does not know herself. I remember hearing, in some casual way, that she was quite a needy person, like an old female servant. I remember somebody trying to make something out of her years and years ago. She was threatened with an action of some sort. But she kept still and held her tongue and the matter blew over. I should think she must be dead by this time. Perhaps some of the rate-collectors may be able to give you more recent information than this," Mr. Lane added.

"Thank you, very much, but I don't think I'll trouble them, you have told me quite enough for the present. Good morning, again." And once more he hastened away.

"I told you he knew nothing," observed Dr. Bird. "I wonder what he has taken into his head. I daresay he thinks those houses have stood still long enough. Lawyers live on the steam of stirring property."

"I am not so sure that he knows nothing," said Mr. Lane, who always cultivated a cautious and take-nothing-for-granted tone when he was with a man of science. "However, we shall see whether anything comes of it."

III.

WHAT could Mr. Duncan have taken into his head? Probably he matured his plans as he walked towards the court, for as soon as he had fulfilled his appointment there, he sauntered straight in the direction of the Great South Road.

It led through some of the busiest city streets, and then across the river. He stopped and looked down at its silvery highway, for he liked to see the red-sailed barges heavy with their loads of yellow hay. But he did not linger long.

Now the Great South Road is not a genteel or fashionable locality. It is a place to buy cheap chairs, ready-made coats and cotton pocket-handkerchiefs. A smell of tar and tallow pervades it. It has an old church behind a few pale trees, and one or two dingy charitable institutions of the minor sort. Mr. Duncan looked up at the great manufacturing premises around him, and then pushed on to Wharf Street, where he came to a dead pause and gazed up at the great ruinous shut-up houses, fac-similes of those he knew so well in his own parish of St. Mitre's, Hay Hill.

There were three of these dismal buildings, and as he looked at them, his eye travelled on to the next house, exactly like them in size and architectural arrangement, and not altogether unlike them, he suddenly noticed, in its desolation and dreariness. Like them it had been built for private residence. They had all been grand houses in their day, for there were dusty, chipped architraves of richly carved wood above the doors, and the link-holders had not yet been wrenched from the railings beside them. The upper windows of the house, which was still apparently inhabited, were all closed, and the shutters looked as if they had not been disturbed for years. But none of the glass panes were broken. The parlour windows were open: that is to say they were screened only by old-fashioned venetian blinds in two divisions, which went up one third of their height and were then met by thin, worn, but perfectly clean, white linen blinds.

Mr. Duncan took note of all these things, and then looked round about him, and straightway turned into a grocer's shop on the opposite side of Wharf Street.

It was a small, prim, old-fashioned shop, with very bright copper scales on the counter. A respectable looking man, with grizzled gray hair, was making some entries in a ledger. Mr. Duncan enquired if he happened to keep a local directory, and the grocer instantly produced one.

He looked up the numbers of the houses opposite. Nos. 1, 2, and 3 were left in blank. No. 4, the half desolate house, was filled in by the name of Mrs. Celestina Turner.

"Oh," said Mr. Duncan, still running his finger down the list of names. "No. 4 is occupied by a Mrs. Turner, is it?"

"Yes, sir," answered the grocer, "and she has always lived there since our time, though you might have asked many people in this street, and they wouldn't have known her name."

"Then she's a very old lady," said Mr. Duncan, only half interrogatively.

"Well, sir, she must be that when one comes to think of it," replied the grocer. "But one does not see much of her. She was certainly oldish when we came here, and we've been here full thirty-five years."

"Is she really very queer, or is she merely a woman with certain ways of her own?" asked Mr. Duncan, confidentially.

"Well, sir, I hardly like to say," answered the grocer, settling down into a leaning position on his counter. "As you say, folks have a right to their own ways. If she's rich, she must be a miser, and if she's poor, then there must be some mystery that keeps her from letting off the rest of that great, big house, which is just lying waste. For it's generally believed hereabout that it is her own house, and also all those other houses alongside of it, and some people do say a deal of property elsewhere. You see all that is queer, sir. Now, my missus makes a great deal out of the clothes the poor old body wears—faded, old-fashioned satins and silks and gauzes. The women all harp on that string. I don't see much in that myself. Why should she buy new clothes, while she's got the old ones to wear out? I tell my wife Mrs. Turner shows her sense there and sets an example to the neighbourhood. But I'll own to you she does look a sight sometimes. I've seen her once or twice in a low-cut gown with short sleeves. And she always has her hair in curls, and when one comes to remember that she must be nigh eighty, that's queer."

"I hope you don't think I'm asking these questions with any view to injure or molest Mrs. Turner in any way," said the young lawyer, straightforwardly. "The plain fact is I am going to consult with her on a matter of business, and knowing nothing of her, I wished, before approaching such a recluse, to be quite sure that she is the person I want to see, and to have some idea of the present state of things. Tell me just one thing more—does Mrs. Turner live alone?"

"No," answered the grocer, "there was an old woman, nigh as old as herself, who lived with her and waited on her till two years ago. She was as queer as herself nearly, and almost as little seen or spoken with, only we saw her going in and out sometimes, whereas Mrs. Turner herself never crossed the threshold. But about two years ago the old woman disappeared: whether she went away or is bed-ridden in the house, I can't say. And then a girl arrived from somewhere and bids fair to grow into another queer old woman if she lives long enough."

"Thank you very much for all your kind information," said Mr. Duncan. "It has helped me in my work. Good afternoon."

"And a pleasanter spoken gentleman I never met," said the grocer to himself, as he peeped between his wares and watched the lawyer across the street.

Mr. Duncan mounted the worn old steps and pulled the bell. It rang with a startling clang, as if it had been asleep for half a century, and now roused itself with a jerk. Then, as he stood awaiting an answer, he looked about him.

The door-steps were faultlessly clean. The railings which skirted them, though rusty and almost devoid of paint, were so free from dust that Mr. Duncan, who was an observant and domesticated man, felt sure that not only a broom, but a duster, had been very carefully used upon them that very morning. The door, too, had been rubbed down, and all the dust removed from its rather elaborate bevelling. These strange people did not love dirt—it was plain that they shrank from it—in spite of their having mysteriously resigned the best rooms of the house to its undivided sway. Even the area was carefully swept up. The kitchen was evidently in present occupation, though its windows, little as they were exposed to public gaze, were completely covered up by chintz curtains, patched in many places, but spotlessly clean, having been washed so often that colour and pattern had nearly disappeared.

The door was not promptly opened, but there was no special delay. Mr. Duncan had scarcely began to wonder whether it was time to ring again, when the latch moved, and he was confronted by the girl the grocer had spoken of.

She held the door open only enough to show her figure: a thin, brown girl, with narrow shoulders. She had brown hair, brown eyes, brown skin—a shade or two lighter—and a dull brown gown, unbrightened by collar or bow. She neither repudiated Mr. Duncan's presence nor asked his business. She only looked up at him, half timidly, half pathetically.

"This is Mrs. Turner's house, I think," said he, in that wonderful conciliatory manner of his, which always seemed to give him every right, because it claimed none.

"Miss Turner's," answered the girl, with a mild emphasis on the spinster prefix.

"I beg your pardon—Miss Turner's," he said. "Is Miss Turner at home? I should so like to speak with her for a few minutes."

The girl's eyes were troubled. Perhaps she had received instructions how to receive and dispose of different kinds of callers, and could not classify this one with his bright, pale face and kind tones.

"I think—will you please tell me what message you have, sir?" she said, hesitatingly, and opening the door a little wider. Mr. Duncan did not advance his foot one inch. Nay, he withdrew it from the threshold, and stood on the flagstone outside. He did not mean to storm this dismal castle.

"Well, it is scarcely a message that can be delivered," he said,

with that winning smile to which even vice-chancellors had been known to respond. "It is not exactly business, and yet it concerns business. One can't easily frame a friendly message which will bear repeating over and over again, you know."

The pink grew clearer in the girl's cheek. She nearly smiled.

"I would send in my name," said Mr. Duncan, "only I am quite certain Miss Turner would not know it. And yet—stop a moment. I will send it in all the same. There is my card. Please to tell the lady she will not know the name, but that I particularly wish to speak with her—not exactly about business. And please say that she must not allow me to disturb her, if she really does not care to see a stranger, or fears to be annoyed."

The girl hesitated. She looked at him again, as if she was half inclined to take him into her own confidence and explain the difficulties of the commission he trusted to her. But she took his card, and abruptly turned back into the house, leaving him standing on the step, with the door ajar. He drew it gently to, shutting himself outside, and stood so, with his hand on the worn bright handle.

He thought she would never come back. She was away more than five minutes. When she did return, she opened the door wide. She had his card still in her hand, and her face was quite flushed.

"I beg your pardon for keeping you standing out there," she said. "I tried to repeat exactly all you told me. But Miss Turner says there must be some mistake, sir. Miss Turner has not a friend in the world. She says there is nobody to send any message to her."

"Ah," said Mr. Duncan, quickly raising the kind gray eyes which he had cast down while the damsel made her little speech, "ah! but will you kindly go back and ask Miss Turner whether she has not a friend in another world."

The girl disappeared without a word. This time she wasted scarcely a moment before returning.

"Miss Turner says, will you come in, sir," she said. "Walk this way, please."

She led Mr. Duncan through the meagre hall, with its threadbare oil-cloth and worm-eaten boards, to a door which opened into the front parlour. It was all done so quickly that Mr. Duncan could scarcely take note of anything except the ancient, airless sort of atmosphere. It was not exactly close: probably the windows were open. It was only air in which nobody spoke or laughed, or thought new thoughts.

The girl threw open the parlour door, ushered him in without a word, and swiftly retired. The room in which he found himself was large and lofty, and sparsely filled with antiquated furniture. The things which struck his first glance were sundry huge busts standing on great black brackets, the whiteness of their marble showing staring and ghastly against the dark wall paper. He saw, too, a fire dimly burning on the wide hearth. Beside it sat two female figures, one of

which rose, and came rapidly towards him as he entered. She was a short slight woman, and as she walked forwards, her back was turned towards such dim light as came through the muffled windows. From her step and her whole contour Mr. Duncan thought her scarcely middle-aged. But when she paused about a yard from him, and turned a little aside so that her face was more clearly seen, he thrilled from top to toe with the shock of her appearance.

Yet there was nothing horrid about her, as that word is generally used. Neither disease nor accident had inflicted any disfigurement on a face which must once have been singularly beautiful, nor was there any glare of madness or evil passion in the still strangely bright blue eyes. But all that he had recently heard of Miss Celestina Turner, and all the vagaries of his imaginative neighbours at St. Mitre's, had not effectually prepared him for the reality.

This was a woman, evidently older than almost any woman he had ever spoken with before, yet with long curls fastened back with school-girl side-combs, and wearing a rich and elaborate robe, made in the fashion which had suited young maidens sixty years before. But it was the face itself which was so awful. For it, too, was a girl's face, withered and faded—a very mummy of girlhood—the face as of a spirit cursed with imperishable union with an ever-perishing body—not immortal life but immortal death.

It was not often that young Mr. Duncan lost his presence of mind. But for a moment he did so. His ever ready inspiration failed him. They stood gazing at each other.

"Ah, you look at me," she said, in a thin, high, but not unmusical voice. "You should not wonder at anything strange, for you have sent me a strange message. Have you come from a tomb to a tomb? But you are a living man, I know, though you have the look of one who——"

She broke off suddenly, and her momentary flash of excitement subsided into a dull commonplace manner.

"Sit down, young man," she said. "I don't see many visitors, and I forget my manners. Sit down, and say what you have to say."

He had had time to recover his self-possession, and he glanced at the other figure by the fire. If a third party was to be present at the carrying out of his wild dream, he wanted to know from the outset to what the influence of that third party was likely to tend.

But Miss Turner was watching him narrowly, and she detected the glance.

"You need not think about her," she said. "You and I are alone. Hannah can neither see, nor hear, nor speak now: she cannot do anything: she cannot even die."

Certainly Hannah was as motionless as the grim busts on the wall. Mr. Duncan looked round at them a little forlornly.

"Well?" said Miss Turner, interrogatively.

"I have a message for you from hundreds and hundreds of people,"

said the young man, turning towards her. He did not fall into a preaching tone. He spoke as if he had said he had a message from a cousin.

But she did not respond. A shade of something—could it be disappointment—passed over her face. She did not yield to it: she sat looking straight before her: he could imagine her sitting so for hours. Mr. Duncan scarcely thought she heard what he said, but when she noticed his pause, she said, promptly:—

“I hear.”

“These people want to say to you,” he resumed, “‘Is it kind to them to let these shut-up houses go to ruin in this dreadful way?’ They don’t know you: they don’t know to whom these houses belong. But one or two of them have got an idea that you know all about it, and they want you to deliver this, their message, to the owner.”

“I am the owner myself,” she said.

“Oh, I am so glad!” exclaimed Mr. Duncan. “For now I know the owner herself has consented to receive the message—and I fancy she will hear me out, and forgive me for taking courage to come and speak to her.”

Again she said, mechanically, “I hear.”

“Don’t you think all we have is given us to keep—and will be required of us again, with an account of the use to which we have put it?” he asked. “You remember how poorly that man fared who kept his talent folded up. Now these houses—such beautiful houses, too!—are not even folded up and kept as they were at the beginning. They get worse every day. I say nothing about the money that is wasted through their condition, though I think some little starving children and some helpless old people whom I saw on my walk here might have sent you a message about *that*. But, my dear madam, would you like to live opposite these houses yourself?”

“It would not matter to me,” she said, glancing at her own blinded casements. But the sense of beauty, dying hard within the woman, was vindicated by two huge nettle geraniums which spread their pale leaves to catch all they could of the obscured sunlight.

“Perhaps you are right concerning that, now,” he admitted, with an infinite tenderness in his tone. “But, Miss Turner, like all of us, you have not only a present, but a past. Were there never days in your life when you would not have liked those terrible walls to make part of their scenery?”

He unconsciously repeated Mr. Lane’s phrase. He paused again, and this time the dry mechanical “I hear” did not urge him on. The awfully set features were quivering a little.

“You cannot imagine what dreadful ideas these houses put into people’s heads,” he said. “Up in St. Mitre’s parish, they have invented two or three murders to account for their condition. Now those are not wholesome fancies, Miss Turner, are they? Oh! and now I think of it, they have given you a ghost for your very next

neighbour," he added, with his irresistible playfulness. "Just think of that! Cannot you fancy how it hurts the poor little children to dream of ghosts scraping graves in cellars, instead of guardian angels keeping watch over them!"

He could not tell how far she listened to him, but she spoke when he paused.

"A ghost next door! How did they invent that, I wonder? Ah, I think I know. I remember one night when a crowd gathered on the pavement in front of the house. We supposed they had heard old Hannah scraping up coals,"—and as she said "old Hannah" a motion of her head indicated the passive figure by the hearth. "There is a way from this house into the cellar of the house next door; and we had always used that cellar for coals."

Mr. Duncan looked at her as she paused.

"And so that was a ghost, was it?" she went on, presently, with a change of voice, and a strange touch of bitter, youthful scornfulness, as much out of place as all the rest of herself and her manner. "Dear me! It seems I can gauge the depth of human folly well, for I said at the time that would make a fine ghost. But I never knew about the reported murders. The people must have known better than that," she added, impatiently.

"They knew nothing, don't you see?" said Mr. Duncan, gently, "and weeds always grow in waste land. You can judge what a terrible effect these houses must have had, when they made decent, respectable people fancy such things without any foundation whatever."

She laughed—a bitter laugh. "I won't say 'without any foundation,' but certainly without any foundation such minds could appreciate. I think there have been murders, sir," she added, drawing a long breath; "two murders; three, I ought to say. Perhaps there will be four. Slow, slow murders. Some of us are not dead yet!"

The figure by the fireside gave a low, dreadful moan. Mr. Duncan started.

"She does not hear anything," said Miss Turner, coolly. "That groan happened to come in by chance."

"But you will tell me that you are not offended by my temerity in approaching you," pleaded Mr. Duncan, meekly.

"Offended!" she exclaimed. "No, certainly not. I only wish you had come sixty years ago," she added presently.

Mr. Duncan felt inclined to say that if he had been his own grandfather he might have done so. Not in levity: but he was a man of light heart and cheery temperament.

"Do you suppose I deliberately planned to leave my houses as they are—or to live as I do?" she asked. "If you do, you know little of the world."

Mr. Duncan said nothing. He felt that the stagnant waters were

stirring beneath, arousing memories and regrets of which he knew nothing, and he was too wise to disturb their influence.

"Murders!" she said, presently, no longer in that wistful tone of mockery. "Murders! Yes;—one, two, three young women slowly, slowly murdered. God only knows by whom or by what! They were all stabbed to the heart, and then left stunned and bleeding on the world's highway, to creep away from being pelted and stoned, as the world always stones and pelts maimed creatures; and there was never a hand or a voice lifted up to call them back—never a healing touch or a healing word given to bind the torn flesh over the wrung nerves! Is this my voice I hear talking?" she asked, fiercely, with a return of the excitement she had manifested on Mr. Duncan's first entrance. "I remember I used to talk like this at first. No; not at first—a little after the first. I feel as if I had been asleep, and had wakened; as if I had gone to sleep very, very hungry, and had woke again to still find no bread. I did not want to wake till I was dead!" she wailed, pitifully. "You had no right to wake me! You little know what you did when you sent in that last message, asking if I hadn't a friend in another world."

Mr. Duncan sat in silence, but she looked in his face and went on.

"I'm so old and so odd that I suppose it is no wonder if my mind is shaky. And so, though of course I knew better, I almost felt as if some miracle was going to happen—as if one of my dead was coming back to life. I thought it might be all a dream—the girl coming in and going out, repeating the words you said; and I thought I would let it go on, and see what the end would be. There are two graves in my life—and I've never seen either of them in the earth. Yes, there's a third grave—poor Agatha's—but that's nothing. She was buried, like me, before she died, and the second sort of grave doesn't matter. Fancy goes a long way, I used to be told when I was a girl, and I knew it must be fancy if either of my dead came back. But it's something to get a moment of pleasant fancy after living, living, living, for sixty years with fancies of the other sort. But when I saw you, I knew you were not a fancy; and yet ——"

She turned to him suddenly, and a strange, soft, womanly, light came into the hard, dry old eyes.

"God bless you!" she said, gently. "If people would always walk, like you, into earth's dark places, they'd find nothing there but some shunned, blinded fellow-creature, groping to get out. I will tell you my history," she added, gazing at him with a yearning look, as though he reminded her of someone in the dead past. "You will have patience with me, I know—and you will have pity!"

(To be concluded.)

MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

IT was the day in Paris that saw the young King Louis XV. bring home his bride, the Polish Princess Marie. The streets were crowded with the blue blouses and white caps of peasant men and women, the scarlet hoods of city dames, and the heavy, gilded coaches of duchesses and countesses. The air was vibrating with the musical clang of bells that rang out from every steeple, making mellow harmony above the lively din of the town below. The arms of bands of soldiers flashed in the sunlight; the rich brocaded silks of the ladies glittered and twinkled. The strains of full Te Deums swelled out in long billows through the doors of the churches to meet the crash of military march and fanfare. The great city was one mass of brilliant, changeful colour, one echo of joyous sound, one tumultuous, gorgeous holiday.

Through the sea of faces, the storm of noise, wound the bridal procession. The boy bridegroom, with features and form of faultless beauty that might have suited an Apollo, yet without one spark of the godlike fire of soul and heart shining in the deep blue eyes. The bride, old enough to be his elder sister at least, in her robe of stiff silver tissue, not all one sweet blush and flutter as bride should be, but calm as a marble column, from mere stupid stolidity; only showing, now and then, that she heeded the people and the joy by a smile from her wide, good-tempered mouth. The court ladies tossed triumphantly their pretty flowered and feathered heads, even while they held up Her Majesty's train, to see how plain and homely the new Queen looked in all her wedding finery. The ministers of state whispered to each other that there would come little profit or glory to France from this alliance with a titular king's daughter. The youthful nobles made sly jests about the slow and sober way in which the stream of so-called true love between the royal pair was flowing.

Then there was the Archbishop who was to tie the knot, and a dozen ecclesiastical dignitaries besides who were to help him, all in a high state of rosy good humour and urbanity; for the bride elect was a most devout daughter of Holy Church, and chosen by the great Cardinal Fleury himself. A long, many-tinted, gilded train of heralds, pursuivants, and attendants, ended the splendid pageant.

It was, in truth, a brave, goodly show, one calculated to attract a child's eyes and fancy. And at a window in one of the principal streets, at a safe distance above the thronged, moving, living panorama, a little girl of three was enjoying very fully and deliberately the spectacle. There was nothing in the child to draw especial attention towards her. She wore no dress belonging to the inmate of the nursery in a noble's hotel: hers was the costume of a simple bourgeois maiden.

Her face, though very intelligent, had not, at this age, any very remarkable beauty. He would have been a bold prophet indeed, who, glancing up at that window that royal wedding day, should have foretold that this child would, by-and-by, rule, with an absolute sway which would brook no rivalry, the King who was now passing beneath, and all France besides, with one wave of her fan.

This child's name was Jeanne Marie Poisson, but not as Jeanne Poisson is she known in history. The humble citizen name was to be swallowed up in the title of Marquise de Pompadour.

Jeanne's father held a rather considerable office under the French Government. His salary was good, and, for some years, all went well with him and his family. Indeed, it would have continued to do so had it not been for M. Poisson's own personal faults. First, he took to gambling, and then, finding that he could not, on his regular yearly income, both satisfy his passion for high play and keep his own household in such ease and affluence as they had been used to, he found it convenient to dip his hand, now and then, into the public purse, one or two of the strings of which his office placed between his fingers. This went on with impunity for a while. M. Poisson was clever enough to keep his own counsel, and to enjoy silently and comfortably the fruits of his well carried out, sly dishonesty. His conscience sometimes pricked him a little, no doubt, but then those pricks were soothed and plastered over by the respect paid to his position by the world in general.

At length, however, a day of retribution came. One of M. Poisson's superiors chanced to take it into his head to look keenly into the way in which things were going on in grades below him; and all Poisson's misdoings were brought suddenly and unsparingly to light. Very likely there were others among his colleagues who had slipped and fallen quite as badly as he had, but governments always think it well to make, at intervals, public examples. It has a good appearance. M. Poisson got timely warning of what was in the wind, and fled from France; but this only saved his life, not his reputation. He was tried, found guilty, and hung in effigy.

Madame Poisson and her two children, a son and a daughter, were left in no enviable situation. Their money resources were very scanty, and society looked on them with no very kindly eye, burdened, as they were, by the husband's and father's deed of shame. Gradually, however, matters grew brighter with them. Madame Poisson was a handsome, quick-witted woman, and managed to glide back again into the favour of her neighbours. A rich old gentleman, by name M. le Normand Tournehem, took a great fancy to her and her children, especially to the girl Jeanne, and became a fast, unwearying friend to the family.

M. le Normand's first care for his favourite Jeanne showed that he must have been a man of enlightened good sense. In those days, girls, even of noble families, seldom if ever received more than the

scantiest sprinkling of education ; but the old gentleman knew that Madlle. Poisson was in a position which would make her mind and hands the chief things she would have to depend on ; so he resolved that she should be trained in a way to make both useful to her in her journey through the world.

Jeanne's intellectual powers soon showed that they were worthy of cultivation. She displayed, early, a considerable artistic talent, and after a little good instruction, followed up by steady application, she handled the engraver's tools with much skill. She also developed, with teaching, a delicate, musical taste ; she became the mistress of several languages, and she was well read in history. Another point in which Madlle. Poisson distinguished herself, and a point greatly valued in the France of that day, was her dancing, which was like sweetest, softest music re-echoed in silent motion. Her whole form seemed to swim on waves of airy grace ; from her little, daintily carried head down to her taper feet she was one with the spirit of the dance. To watch her, thus animated, brought back to tired eyes dreams of summer leaves waving in the breeze.

This singular charm of Jeanne Poisson's dancing arose, no doubt, in great measure from the beauty of her shape and figure. As a very young girl she was too thin and wasp-like in form ; but as soon as she grew up, her flexible grace of movement and carriage became one of the most striking things about her. Her face, also, bloomed into a rare flower of female loveliness ; the features were delicately chiselled, and were lit by a mobility of expression which was wonderful in its changeful radiance, as it flashed from eye to lip, from cheek to brow. Added to this, Jeanne Poisson had a ready tongue in social talk, that sent sparks of wit and fun flying hither and thither wherever she went. No wonder, then, that she had a crowd of worshippers round her shrine. Madlle. Poisson had far more liberty of speech and action in her bourgeois sphere than was allowed, in those times, in France, to young ladies of noble birth ; and this, with her natural aptitude for making the most of all the advantages she possessed, made her, even at this early age, a star that shed its brightness very freely upon all.

It was necessary, however, for her and her mother to make a choice from among the many lovers who surrounded her ; and they were guided in it by their gratitude and affection for their old friend M. le Normand. M. le Normand d'Etiolles, his nephew, was one of Jeanne's warmest, most constant suitors, and he was accepted.

The young man seems, at least at the time of his marriage, to have been most thoroughly in love. As for Jeanne, she certainly did not feel a single spark of real affection for her husband from the very beginning. But then conjugal attachment was as much out of fashion for women, in those days, in France, as white muslin and blue ribbons. What Jeanne was doing in marrying M. le Normand d'Etiolles, without caring for him any more than she did for her hair-

dresser, was just what all other girls of her age were doing around her : and so we can scarcely blame her for the proceeding.

M. le Normand d'Etioles was a rich man, and his money enabled his wife to shine yet more brightly in society than she had yet done. Her wit and beauty were now set off by gleaming jewels, and folds of billowy lace, and glistening silk hangings. Her salon became a favourite resort for men of mind and thought, who always found a responsive note in their hostess's words and sympathetic eyes ; and many of the young nobility so far forgot their grandeur as to be never so happy as when they were this bourgeois lady's guests.

Had it not been for certain splendid temptations which came in her way, Jeanne might thus have played a brilliant and innocent part in the story of Parisian society of that period. Perhaps, in this case, we might know her now as an author or an artist ; but a very different path from that was before her.

One night : a night which was to decide fair Jeanne's destiny : she went, dressed in character, to a masquerade ball. Louis XV. was there, as he fancied, incognito. He had seen and admired Madame Le Normand d'Etioles at some public place where they had chanced to be together ; and, masked though she was, he at once recognised her grace of shape and movement. The King, believing himself completely disguised, followed the lady, and soon contrived to get into conversation with her on a sofa a little apart from the rest of the company. The astute Jeanne, who was as quick sighted as she was beautiful, knew, from the very first moment, who was sitting at her side, but gave not the slightest outward sign of such knowledge. As the gilded ball of playful gallantry was being rolled nimbly up and down between the two, there rose first in Jeanne's mind a waking whisper of what she might become.

A "Maîtresse en titre" was as much, at that time, a recognised personage at the French court as the Prime Minister of France himself. She was to the full as highly honoured as that dignitary, and if she played her cards well she might hold quite as much power in her hands. She who had last filled the office was just dead when the King and Madame Le Normand d'Etioles met at the masquerade. Jeanne was by nature aspiring and ambitious, and the question flashed through her brain : "Why should not I take her place?"

With that question the first drop of temptation filtered into Jeanne's soul. She did not, as has before been said, love her husband. Her grasping brain was enticed and drawn on by the prospect of vast power which now opened before her ; for already the whole woman felt instinctively that she was fit to reign. That little drop of temptation, then, grew and grew until it swelled into a great wave, which washed her away from all home ties, and landed her, at length, in the royal palace.

Jeanne does not seem to have been carried away, at this time, by any very strong passion for her royal lover : it was hardly likely she

could be when we consider his great mental inferiority to hers. A thirst for power was what chiefly led her on. Still, throughout her whole career, she was very faithful to Louis, and very true in her devotion to his interests and to those of France.

When we cast back our glance up the vista of time, and fix our gaze on the picture of this great woman, and mark the one black shadow which rests upon it, we must not judge her by the light of our own day. We must look at her impartially among the social circumstances which, in the France of that age, surrounded her. Conjugal fidelity was a thing utterly unknown in the land among the higher classes. The lover, "*l'ami intime*" as he was called in polite French parlance, was an indispensable part of every fine lady's household. It is true that both the fair dames and their cavaliers were frequently seen at mass and at all sorts of religious ceremonies, but they went back again to the salon to flirt and make love quite as briskly as ever. The King's "*Maitresse en titre*" was paid full as much respect by every one about the Court as was the Queen, and the Queen never dreamt of presuming to dispute her rival's rights; the whole public opinion in grand circles would have been against her if she had. We must recollect all this when we think of Madame de Pompadour, and be thankful that we have fallen on times when purer manners reign, at least, in outward things. We must admire the real nobility of the woman's nature, which could not fail to shine out even in her equivocal position, and strive in our generation to do as much for our country and our fellow men as she did for hers.

Louis XV. according to the fashion of sovereigns of the day, made short work in the appropriation and exaltation of his favourite. M. Le Normand d'Etioles was civilly told that he was no more wanted in France, and Jeanne was made Marquise de Pompadour, the name under which we know her.

When we set aside Madame de Pompadour's connection with the King, there can be no doubt about the lofty and brilliant part she played in the history of France of that period. She roused Louis from his natural apathetic sloth of character, and sent him out, as the head of his army, to win glory for France and himself. She held the reins of government very much in her hands, and managed state affairs with a clear-sightedness and skill that would have done honour to a gray-headed minister. She was a liberal patroness of men of art and letters. She founded hospitals and tended, herself, the sick in their wards. Her fertile, inventive faculties produced all kinds of new fashions in dress and furniture, trade flourished under her auspices, and her brain may be said to have kept going three parts of the manufactories in France. Her artistic talent came well to the front at this period, and she would sometimes draw original designs to be painted on china services which she ordered for her own use: designs which always became very popular and general, such was their elegance and taste.

Many are the great men who stand grouped round Madame de Pompadour, all of them owing something to her genial sympathy or kindly discernment. We will try, for a moment, to call up a vision of her salon on one of the evenings of her grand receptions. Lights are gleaming in their silver sconces; bright eyes are sparkling, jewels are flashing, flowered brocade dresses, of every tint that decks a summer garden, are shimmering. It dazzles our gaze as we look around. But most radiant of all shines the beauty of the lady about whom everybody is clustering; the colours of her robes are harmonious as the hues that tinge the western clouds at eventide. That grace of motion, as she glides hither and thither among her guests, the lightning-like play of expression swiftly coming and going in that fair face, all proclaim to us that this is none other than Madame de Pompadour herself, a fitting queen, in truth, for the scene.

But hark! what is that sound that comes ringing up the staircase; that sound which makes everyone look expectantly at the door—yes, even Madame herself, though she is at this instant paying court to an old duke whose breast is one sheet of glittering orders? It seems almost like shrill laughter; and yet, as it draws nearer, we find that it is only a high-keyed, high-pitched voice. And now the speaker is in the room. At first sight there is nothing so very remarkable in his appearance. He is short and thin, and wears a very plain coat. But watch his face as he talks, and we change our opinion. Were ever eyes so full of intellectual fire? But as for the smile, it is so full of finest irony that it makes us shiver as if we were looking at a bright icicle. He is always in restless movement. The many gilded, satin-covered chairs around are of little use to him, for nearly all the evening he is kneeling at the feet of some lady or other of the company. Voltaire is always a faithful adorer, at least in all outward and visible signs, of woman.

Altogether a very different individuality is the form which next crosses our magic canvas. With what an air of supreme scorn he folds his arms upon his breast; what self-absorbed melancholy there is in his glance; the ladies get no homage here, they have to court him for so much as a word or look; Rousseau is, evidently, entirely wrapped up to-night in his own merits, and his latest pet personal grievance.

It does our eyes good to turn away from Jean Jacques, to one who is standing not far off. What a broad, thoughtful brow he has; what a calm, still depth there is in his glance; and what hearty, sunny sweetness there is in his smiles. We feel, as we draw near him, as if, at his side, the most downcast spirit would be lifted up, the weakest would grow strong; we are sure that there must be quiet home brightness in his house, even in the midst of this restless, tinselled, Parisian life. And so there is, for Helvetius chose his fair, young wife without one thought of anything but love. But we can

linger no longer before our enchanted mirror: we must break the spell and hurry away.

Madame de Pompadour never lost her empire over the mind of Louis XV. after she had once gained it. Years went on, and her noontide of beauty was past, but still she seems to have had as much attraction for the King as ever. This lasting influence, no doubt, had its chief source in her varied power of charming. The mind of Louis was a jaded, weary mind, that had worn threadbare life's pleasures, and then fallen half asleep out of sheer apathetic idleness. But whenever he entered Madame de Pompadour's presence he was sure to find some new, sparkling excitement awaiting him. Now it was some fresh jewel of wit that flashed upon her lips; now she came to meet him in some wondrously devised costume. And yet, all the while that she kept him thus her willing slave, she never failed to act a nobler part towards him in stirring him up to recollect his kingship and his duties to France. It is no exaggeration to say that Madame de Pompadour was the mainspring of every public act and word, indicative of the slightest spirit and courage, done or spoken by Louis XV. at this period of his reign.

Madame de Pompadour probably owed part of her intellectual superiority to the education she had received, which differed so much from the narrow, superficial teaching of ladies of rank of that day in France. It was a strange, piquante novelty to King Louis to find a woman who could talk, with sense and lively freedom, on any subject, and who allowed herself to have opinions of her own. This daughter of the Bourgeoisie, who had been brought up to gain her own livelihood, who did not scruple to speak out her mind even in his royal presence, was, as it were, a wondrous, unexpected star which had appeared in the courtly horizon.

It is certain that Madame de Pompadour woke up more of Louis XV.'s heart than did ever any other woman. But still, on the whole, we feel that the effete, sluggish King was very unworthy of the life's service she gave him. She died at the age of forty-one; she died worn out with anxious care for France and for her King. And still her form, as we, in these latter days, look backward, stands out, in bright relief, amid the moral eclipse of all things high and noble of that period in French history: an eclipse which was already foretelling the fearful storm of the Revolution. The French nobility dined, daily, with gold dishes on their tables, while the poor were starving in the streets. She dined with gold dishes too, it is true, but she fed the poor, and was always their friend and champion. For this, then, if for nothing else, is the name of Jeanne de Pompadour to be remembered.

ALICE KING.

THE BARRISTER'S CLERK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A FORGOTTEN CRIME."

I.

TIME—one of the earlier days of April in the year 187—. Scene
—The Central Criminal Court of the County of Middlesex.

Let us watch two young barristers who are entering in wig and gown, and who take their seats on the benches reserved for counsel.

In bringing it about that these two young men should be friends, Nature had followed her usual mode of procedure; for in nearly every characteristic they were unlike each other—except in indolence. While Francis Julian was a man who had a great deal of fire and passion hidden away under his apparently listless exterior, his brother barrister carried his character visibly written on his face. Charlie Thornton—for that was the name of Julian's pet friend and "fidus Achates"—was altogether superficial. And yet, with it all, he was not a bad fellow, and could you have scraped off a certain outer coating of intellectual cynicism, you would have left nothing on earth to object to in him, and a good deal to like. At the Bar he was two years senior to Julian.

It would not, I think, be revealing professional secrets to confess that neither of our friends was in very large practice. Day after day did Julian come down to his musty old Temple chambers, to find a striking absence of briefs. Morning after morning did he knock at his door, which was opened to him by a very seedy-looking clerk, when something like the following dialogue used to take place:—

"Anybody been here, Peters?"

"No one, sir."

"No solicitor, I suppose?" This was the usual question, quite stereotyped by this time.

"No, sir, none." The usual answer, too.

What wonder, then, that Julian was discouraged? He used to look out of his chamber windows, and wonder how the "fellows opposite," whom he could see working away at their tables, ever managed to get any business. Through a little opening in the Temple buildings, he could just see the sparkle of the river, and the lazy barges creeping seaward on the ebbing tide. Often had he watched them, envying the free out-of-door life of sailors, and longing to hurl his pent-up wasting energies into some current of laborious action. At present, therefore, he is not much interested in the details of the Law, finds Equity dry, Common Law drier, and indeed a "plentiful lack of moisture" in the whole range of legal studies.

Sprung from a family which had its ancestral home in one of our

beautiful southern counties, Julian had yet hardly ever visited the family mansion. Our hero's father had been disinherited because he chose to follow his own bent and select a profession for himself. He had become a doctor. His father—our hero's grandfather—at first expressed his unbounded horror at such an intention, having an old-world sort of notion that to do any work for a livelihood was lowering. He told him plainly that he might become a doctor if he liked, but that he would thereby forfeit all hope of receiving a single penny or a single acre from his paternal inheritance. The son, however, refused to abandon his pet project, and the result was that, when his father died, his younger brother George took the fine old house and grounds.

Dr. Julian had rapidly risen in his profession, and amassed a large fortune, so he did not particularly resent being deprived both of the family seat and of all share in the pecuniary inheritance.

I ought to add that George Julian refused to touch his brother's share of the money which was left; and as Dr. Julian was too proud to accept it, it lay accumulating in the Funds for the good of George's nephew. At this time of our story Dr. Julian had been dead about five years; and Francis had about as often visited at his uncle's house, never very willingly, though his uncle was kindness itself; but Francis was not the sort of person to reject proffers of good-will from any human creature. Perhaps the fact that his uncle's only child was a fair girl just ripening into womanhood had been an additional inducement to him to forget the past.

And now it is time to come back into Court.

The case to be tried was a case of burglary. The prisoner was a rather fine-looking man, prematurely aged, and with an expression of subdued excitement on his features. Now and again he would pass his hand wearily across his brow. At a little distance from the dock a lad, about fourteen years old, apparently, was standing. Between him and the prisoner it was plain some relationship existed, for the latter would every now and then direct his gaze with a look of yearning anxiety into the face of the boy. A pale and nervous-looking face it was, too, and its owner was clothed in garments which were decidedly threadbare.

The lad was looking round on the unwonted spectacle, apparently trying to find in all that strange crowd of human beings some sympathising glance. Although dirt and early acquaintance with want had drawn a veil over his features, yet there was in them something wonderfully open and attractive; something brave, yet tender, that spoke of an unspoilt nature lying in the unexplored depths of that young human soul. Who shall explore them? Who shall find and bring up to light the hidden precious ore in that boyish heart? Who is to be his teacher, the guide of his youth? See him as he looks with a face of entire confidence, of pitying love, on the poor prisoner in the dock, and say what are his chances of growing up a useful man, when his

lot seems joined to that of a criminal, and his best affections are thrown away on an outcast?

But the examination of the first witness is proceeding, while Julian and his friend were briefly noticing the demeanour of the prisoner and the aspect of the Court. The witness is the owner of the house broken into, a worthy tradesman of the better class, and he has deposed to having been roused from his bed at the untimely hour of four in the morning by a noise in the lower regions. He at first had thought it might be the cat. "And when you discovered it was not the cat, what then?" asked the examining counsel, with gentle persuasiveness.

"Well, sir," replied the witness, "my wife said to me, 'John,' says she, 'I don't think it *can* be the cat, because ——'"

"Never mind what your wife *said*," interrupts the barrister; "tell us what you *did* yourself."

"Well, sir," proceeds the unhappy deponent, who is in the painful position of a person not permitted to tell his own story in his own way, "my wife says to me that she thought that it couldn't be the cat; so, after listening for ten minutes or so, I slips on my clothes, opens the door, and goes to the head of the stairs"—and the witness goes on to relate, with the assistance of his counsel, how he first summoned to his aid a man who looked after the shop and who slept in the house, and how by their united efforts they succeeded in capturing the burglar. The evidence, as far as it goes, is conclusive against the prisoner, and there does not seem much hope of his escaping a severe sentence.

"Is the prisoner unrepresented by counsel?" asks the judge on the bench.

"My lord, the prisoner has not the *advantage* of being represented by counsel," replies the barrister for the prosecution, humorously; at which there is a laugh in court, and the usher again feels it necessary to say "Sh! Sh! Sh!"

"The prisoner ought to be defended," says the judge; "who is the youngest counsel present?"

At this question there is a consultation among the representatives of the bar, and the result is quickly seen by our friend Julian rising and saying:

"My lord, I believe that I have the honour to have been called most recently."

"Then," replies the judge, "I must ask you to undertake the defence of the prisoner."

"My lord," replies Julian, "at so short a notice, and without any consultation with the prisoner, I feel ——"

"Every allowance will be made for you," interrupts the judge. "In order to give you more time to prepare the materials for a defence, I will adjourn for lunch now, as it is one o'clock, and you can reserve your cross-examination of this witness till after the adjournment."

Julian bows his acknowledgments, and the learned judge rises

from his seat, and, preceded by the officious official of the court, disappears into his private apartment. There is a general putting on of hats and outbreak of noise in court.

"Well, here's a go!" is, I grieve to have to report, our hero's first exclamation on hearing that on him Fortune has bestowed the privilege of being a defence to the defenceless, and that to him attaches the proud duty of pleading for another's liberty. Then, turning to his "alter ego" seated beside him—"What shall I say, Charlie, old fellow? What would *you* say if you were in my place?"

Then he glanced at the "*mauvais sujet*" in the dock, and involuntarily his heart softened towards the wretched being who was to be his client, and he looked with closer attention at his movements.

At that moment the prisoner was beckoning to the boy we have before referred to, who at once advanced towards him, and, by leave of the warders, put into the hands of the prisoner a large lump of bread and cheese. He would then have gone back to sit on his bench, but this little incident had not passed unnoticed by the young advocate.

He called to the boy, "Come here, my lad; I want to speak to you." And the boy, looking rather frightened, advanced slowly to the awful gentleman in the wig, who had summoned him for some unknown and perhaps dreadful object.

But Julian said very mildly: "So you've given up your lunch to your friend?"

"It's dinner," said the youth, eyeing his interlocutor. "It'll be his only meal to-day, I guess."

"And what will you do yourself? Have you had your dinner before?" continued Julian.

"No," said the boy. He answered as if dinner were a sore subject with him—perhaps owing to the fact that he had not had one for some days. Then, after a minute's pause, he added, "That *was* my dinner, that was."

"Well," said Julian, secretly pleased with the boy's frankness of speech, "you tell me what I want to know about your friend there, and then, when we go away, I'll give you as much dinner as you can eat." He made the boy sit down on the bench beside him, and how he occupied the half hour till the entrance of the judge after lunch, the subsequent events in court will sufficiently disclose.

The door of the private apartment opens wide. Out steps the official briskly and stands on one side; a hush takes place in court, and the judge comes forth once more to his work and to his labour. The bar rise: the judge bows to the bar, the bar bow to the judge: the judge takes his seat, the bar take theirs. The witness who is to be cross-examined, and who has been preparing for the ordeal during the interval by administering to himself a few hasty doses of French brandy and Dutch courage, steps up into the box; up rises Mr. Julian, the jury prick up their ears, and the drama begins.

I will not weary my readers' patience with a verbatim account of the proceedings. The cross-examination of this witness was very much like all other cross-examinations. When Julian took up the defence he devoted his energies to proving that the prisoner had at the time of the burglary taken no trouble to conceal his presence in the house ; that he had made little, if any resistance to capture ; and that, in fact, his behaviour was just that of a man who had not tasted food for twenty-four hours, and was driven to burglary to prevent starvation.

Then it became Julian's duty to bring forward any evidence that he could in support of the defence.

"I suppose you have no evidence for the prisoner?" said the judge, leaning forward over his desk and addressing the barrister.

"Excuse me, my lord," replied Julian. "Although I regret to say that I have not had time to properly prepare the prisoner's case and call any witnesses who might give a different colour to the transaction, yet I am not entirely without witnesses." Then he turned to the boy whom I have before mentioned, and said, "Edward Graham, step into the box."

"Edward Graham," shouted the usher, "step *hup* into the box !"

The boy, looking pale and rather timid, did as he was bid, was duly sworn, and then, as all witnesses do, fixed his eyes on the face of the examining counsel, instead of turning them, as all witnesses ought to do, towards the judge and jury.

"Now, my lad," began Julian, "what relation are you to the prisoner?"

"I ain't no relation, sir," replied the boy ; "but I *calls* him my father."

"Haven't you got a father of your own?" was the next question.

"No, sir, not as I knows of. He," pointing to the prisoner, "he has always been like my father to me ; so that's why I calls him it."

"What?" put in the judge, "haven't you any other friends in London? No relations, brothers or sisters?"

"No, sir," said the boy simply, "I've got no friends but him ; he found me when I was a little chap. Somebody left me on a doorstep, so I've heard tell, and *he* took me to his house and fed me and took care of me, so I calls him my father."

"Now, can you tell us what your father, as you call him," proceeded Julian, "had been doing on the day when he broke into this house?"

Gradually, in answer to this and other questions, some of the most important facts with regard to the prisoner's life and antecedents were elicited. He had once been, it seemed, a London carter in the service of a great brewing house ; bit by bit he had acquired drinking habits, had been turned out of his employment, had gone from bad to worse, had lived a wretched half-starved life in a cellar for the last six months with the boy he called his son. Finally, on the day on which the burglary was committed, he had gone out in a state of desperation,

determined to get some employment, or at all events to get food by fair means or foul.

"I tried to pull him back, sir," said the boy, "when I saw what he was up to; but it was no good, he was mad like; and when he had got into the house I ran away."

"That's true!" broke in the prisoner, in a hoarse, smothered voice. "I *was* mad, and that is the fact; but it's past now."

The warders sternly ordered him to be silent. But evidently this was no easy matter for him; he was labouring under strong emotion, pitiable to see, and he kept pressing his hands tightly together whilst his lips were muttering inarticulate words, and all the time his eyes were fixed on the face of his youthful defender in the witness-box.

"And what made you go on living with him," resumed Julian, "when you knew the bad ways he was getting into?"

Up to this point the boy had answered well enough; but now he pursed up his lips, and was perfectly silent. The question had to be repeated twice; and then the lad suddenly broke out into a cry that seemed to come from the depths of his little heart. "Why, how could I leave him, after all he'd done for me? He found me when I was starving, and he cared for me and fed me, and—and—oh, sir," addressing the judge, "if *he* is sent to prison let *me* go too!" And regardless of judge, jury, bar, and spectators, he burst into passionate tears.

The prisoner made a quick convulsive movement, as if to go to the boy. The warders stopped him. He gave one fierce, baffled glance round, and then bowed his head down, and became quite still. Only by the twitching of his face and the clasping of his hands could you tell that he was at all moved by this unlooked-for incident. But the incident produced its effect on the Court.

"That will do, my little lad," said Julian very kindly. "You can go and sit down now."

Then, without giving himself much time to pause and think, he turned to the jury and briefly addressed them. He dwelt on the sad tale that had been unfolded to them that day, yet of the proof that tale afforded that the prisoner had a nature capable of better things; and he especially insisted that the act, of which he had no doubt been guilty, had been occasioned—as was perfectly evident—by the recklessness of hunger and privation. When deeply stirred Julian forgot himself, which is the key to oratory; and his speech to the jury, though not much more than a quarter of an hour in length, was listened to in silence, and produced an impression on all who heard it.

The prosecuting counsel replied. Then came the summing up, and the last stage of all was reached—the jury retired to consider their verdict.

In half an hour they returned, and the foreman announced—"We find the prisoner guilty of breaking into the house with intent to steal food only; and we strongly recommend him to the mercy of the

Court." So Julian's eloquence and the boy's evidence had produced their effect. The poor prisoner was allotted a year's imprisonment, was hurried out of the dock before he was able to realise his sentence; the crowd began to move out, another case was called on, and the Court resumed its ordinary work as if no tragedy equal in its awful import to the self-wrought doom of *Oedipus* or the predestined fate of *Antigone* had a few moments before been acted within those gloomy walls.

II.

Two months have passed away since the day when we saw our hero going through the unwonted exertion of pleading on behalf of a fellow-countryman in a court of justice. Things have altered since then, and people have altered with them. Climb with me the narrow old stairs leading up to the chambers where we first made the acquaintance of our young barrister. We knock at his door: there is no response from within. As our eyes grow accustomed to the semi-darkness, we direct our gaze again to the "sporting oak" of the barrister's chambers, and see pinned close under the knocker a very small card with a very small name printed on it, "Mr. Francis Julian." In the corner are these words, written in pencil: "Out of town at present, attending gaol deliveries."

So we descend the rickety, dry-rotted stairs again, satisfied that our friend is not to be found in London, and hoping that he is reaping a rich harvest from his present occupation of gaol delivering—a process with which we may, without showing great ignorance, confess ourselves to be unfamiliar.

Now that we have discovered where Mr. Francis Julian is not, this pleasant day of early summer, let us find out where he is. Fly with me, reader, a few short miles, till we reach the beautiful rolling Surrey hills, and are quite free from the clamour of London and "the spreading of the hideous town." We alight at last, and wander along a winding lane, green with its untrimmed hem of grass and flowers, and overshadowed by the leafy arms of meeting trees. We come in sight of an old church, with massy square tower and ivy-covered portal, and the clustering grave-stones all gathered round its walls. A little further, and we catch a glimpse of old gables peeping through trees; we see a meadow edged with tall elms, in which the rooks keep up a perpetual windy cawing; and we arrive at length in front of the mansion itself, and the beautiful lawn upon which its antique windows look out.

There are two chairs on the lawn. One is tenanted by a fair girl of some eighteen to twenty years, who is dangling in her hand a "racquet," with which she has evidently just been playing at lawn-tennis. Her cheeks are flushed with the exercise, and her whole figure is full of graceful health. This is Miss Edith Julian, cousin of the rising legal star of the same name of whom we have heard some-

thing. In the other chair, in an attitude of complete and unmitigated contentment, sits the legal star in question, who has chosen this peculiarly easy method of "attending gaol deliveries."

"Well, you see," he is remarking to his cousin, "it isn't untrue. I really *am* attending gaol deliveries. Doesn't every barrister find his chambers in London every bit as bad as a gaol, and can anyone deny that I am delivered from them at present? Yes, and precious glad I am at the deliverance!"

"What!" replies his cousin; "you don't surely mean to say you prefer lawn-tennis to law courts? And when you are getting on so much better than you were, according to your own account! I wonder you haven't more ambition. I'm sure you're really longing to be back among your musty old books. Now, confess, Frank!"

"By Jove!" was Julian's reply, half rising from his chair, and looking at his companion. "What a fool I have been, wasting my days in town when I might have been down here all the time—with you. Confess, indeed! I shall have to confess——" and then he very illogically, unreasonably, and stupidly broke off and stopped.

"Well!" laughed the mischievous Miss Edith, "I'm waiting to hear your confession. Go on."

"Do you really want to know what it would be?" asked Julian.

"Of course I do," she answered, "if it's nothing very terrible."

"Very well, then; you've brought it on yourself, mind, whatever I may say. I was going to remark that I was so far from longing to be back among my 'musty old books,' as you call them, that I should be quite content to burn every volume, and never see one of them again, if I could be sure of having your face to look at instead." And Julian fell back in his easy chair, feeling like a prisoner in the dock who has just pleaded guilty.

And she, to whom this flattering speech is addressed, does she seem startled at this declaration? By her answer you would think she regarded it quite as a matter of indifference. She merely laughs, and says:

"Oh! I knew that before." Then, for some reason, she abruptly changes the subject.

"But tell me all about these new briefs that you have been getting lately, and the trial you told me about, and the little boy, and everything. I am very interested in it."

Julian goes through the incidents of the scene in the Old Bailey court, which we know already, glancing lightly at his own performances, and making much of the little pathetic incident between the prisoner and the boy he claimed as his son.

But we will tell his story without all the additions, explanations, and interruptions to which it was unavoidably subjected when told by an enthusiastic young barrister to a sympathetic little ignoramus of a cousin.

When the sentence of a year's imprisonment was pronounced, the

boy, who had tried to save his father from punishment, quite broke down. He sobbed so bitterly that Julian had to take him out of court himself. But when he had got him out of court, what on earth was he to do with him? So there the inexperienced young counsel was, left "alone in London" with a homeless and friendless outcast of a boy. At last he remembered he had promised him a dinner; so he straightway kept his word by taking the lad into the nearest eating-house, and insisting on his forgetting his sorrows sufficiently to do justice to the unaccustomed fare.

After that, being still quite ignorant what to do with the boy, Julian took him home to his own lodgings in Piccadilly, and told the people of the house to give him a bed somewhere, and he would settle about him next day.

As often happens, he was saved from the trouble of deciding what was to be done by something turning up which he never had expected. You remember, I daresay, my speaking of an antiquated clerk of his, by name Peters. The very next day after Julian had taken the boy, he went down as usual to his chambers, and was sitting in his customary arm-chair "revolving many memories," and wondering if that chance-got brief of his for the unhappy burglar would be the last he should ever have, when there was a slight tap at the door, and the face of the clerk appeared, looking more cadaverous and even less attractive than usual.

He wanted to "speak a few words" to his master. These few words contained an intimation that he wished to leave his master's service, owing to the lack of work and consequent lack of fees. He drew a brief but suggestive comparison between the chambers of Mr. Francis Julian and the chambers of Mr. Higgins, Q.C., whose clerk he had been before, as seen from the point of view of the person who pockets half-a-crown on every guinea paid to his master; and I need hardly say that he obtained from his present master leave to take himself off that very day, if he chose.

It must be confessed that Julian did not like being deserted, and felt somewhat bitter against the world in general, and the successful Mr. Higgins in particular. "It's a clear case of the rats and the sinking ship," he said to himself. But luckily he was prevented from further melancholy musing by a sudden thought which occurred to him. A few moments' hesitation, and he had determined on an experiment as bold as it was original.

In a word, the next day saw Julian's young protégé installed as the barrister's clerk. The mercenary Mr. Peters had successfully accomplished his "Hegira" from the businessless chambers to which he objected, and his successor certainly had one advantage in his master's eye, in that he could make no private comparisons between his past and his present circumstances which could be anything but favourable to the latter.

Julian was not really as rash in this new arrangement as he might

appear. He had observed the lad's character and behaviour, and had come to the decided opinion that he was both clever and honest, though in need of instruction. "Do you know what a brief is?" he had asked of Master Ned, and on this essential point he had found the densest ignorance prevailing, and had consequently given his new clerk a short lecture on the subject.

Well, the very first morning of the experiment, in came the gay and ubiquitous Mr. Thornton, and proposed a visit to Lord's to see a cricket match.

"You've got quite famous, old boy," he said, "with your defence the other day. You can afford to idle a few hours away."

"Have I?" said Julian; "well, it's a case of '*virtus laudatur et alget*.' The attorneys haven't been here in overpowering numbers since that event."

"Oh! they'll come fast enough," replied his friend, and went off into an enumeration of all the advantages to be got out of the course of action he proposed. Now, Julian should of course have resisted this temptation. Mr. Thornton's clever sophistry should have fallen on heedless ears, as he pleaded that if the attorneys did not come to them, they need not stop in for the attorneys. "You can leave word with your clerk," he added, "that you're engaged in the Lords with an important *bail* case, if you like; that'll be quite true."

So, in the end, Julian set off with his tempter, giving directions to his boy-clerk as to what to do in his absence, and telling him he might go out at half-past one and get some lunch for himself. "I'll be back," said Julian, "about five o'clock."

That evening Julian returned at the appointed time, wishing he had not wasted a day, wondering what he should have done if he had not wasted it, and hoping that his clerk had behaved all right in his absence.

He knocked at his chambers. There was no reply. He knocked again, with the same result. "It's lucky I've got a key," he said. "I wonder what that young villain's about; fast asleep, I suppose."

But when he entered his clerk's apartment he found it untenanted. The same was the case with his own room. The bird had flown. Julian took a hasty look round to see if all his books and other possessions were in their place. Yes, none disturbed; and he felt ashamed of the momentary suspicion that had flashed across his mind.

"No; whatever I believe about him, I don't believe he's capable of *that*," said Julian, aloud. "I only hope he hasn't gone and lost himself in this waste howling wilderness."

And this thought made him sufficiently uncomfortable for the next half-hour, when, to his great relief, he heard the outer door open, and his clerk enter.

"Ned!" shouted Julian from his room. "Come here!"

The boy entered at the call. Julian could hardly believe his eyes; he had in his hand a brief!

"Oh, sir!" burst out the boy, "I don't know if I've done right, but——"

But Julian interrupted him. "Now, just tell me first, will you, where you've been to. Why did you go out?"

"Why, sir," replied the boy, "you told me to get some lunch."

"Lunch! at this time!" said Julian, "why, it's past five o'clock; why didn't you get it sooner?"

"Why, sir"—and here, in a quite unaccountable way, Ned stopped short, and looked remarkably as if he would cry.

"I'm too severe on him," thought Julian; "but I must get him to do what he's told." Then he said, kindly: "Now tell me why you didn't go out earlier; I only want to know; I'm not angry with you at all."

The boy brightened up, and said, still hesitating, as if he did not know what would be the effect of his explanation on his master: "You see, sir, I thought I'd better go without as long as I could; it's what I've done often and often before; and so——"

"And so, because you've starved before, you thought you ought to starve now. No; I don't intend you to starve with me. And now, tell me," continued Julian, looking at the paper the boy held in his hand, "what made you take one of my briefs out with you?"

"This, sir?" said the boy, holding up the brief. "Oh, I was going to ask you if I had done right. It isn't an old one, sir; it's quite new, and I didn't take it away from here. I've just brought it here."

"Let's have a look at it!" said Julian, and he took it from the boy. Yes, here it was, sure enough, a brand-new brief, and a good thick one too; with the words "Mr. Julian" on it, and the other equally important words which denote the remuneration which Mr. Julian is to receive.

"And how did you get this?" asked Julian.

"Why, I was walking back here, sir, and a gentleman stopped me and asked me if I wasn't the boy he had seen in the witness-box at the Old Bailey last Thursday. I knew what he meant, sir, and I said I was. Then he says, 'And do you know the name of the barrister who was speaking—the one that defended the prisoner?' and I said, 'Why, it's Mr. Julian you mean, and I'm living with him.' 'Oh! you're living with him, are you?' says the gentleman. 'Well, come with me.' With that he takes me to some rooms up some stairs, and gives me this, and says—'You give Mr. Julian that. I wanted to send it him, but I didn't know his name, and so if I hadn't seen you I should have given it to somebody else.' So that is why I brought it, sir," the lad wound up, "and I hope I've done right."

"Right!" said Julian. Then, feeling he ought to suppress his emotions of internal ecstasy in presence of his clerk: "Oh, yes, you've done quite right; you couldn't have done much better." The young face looked delighted. Julian glanced again at the brief.

There was a good big fee on it, and the name of one of the best firms of solicitors in the City.

"I almost wonder he trusted the lad with it," soliloquised Julian, "but there is something about him which disarms suspicion, and in that new suit of clothes he would be unrecognisable if he hadn't so striking a face. I never saw one more innately noble."

Julian dismissed his new clerk, and set himself to an hour's work at his new brief, which he found to be another case of defending an unhappy prisoner. Having mastered all the facts in it, he left the arguments till the next day, and sauntered back to his rooms in Piccadilly, the cricket-match entirely forgotten, indulging in the most foolish day-dreams of fame and future success that ever entered into the head of a young barrister of little experience and large imagination.

III.

THIS was what Julian told his cousin, though not exactly in these words, while the shadows were getting longer and longer on the grass, and the lawn-tennis game was quite neglected. Very interested did Edith appear in the recital, too, and this naturally added to Julian's pleasure in telling her about it.

"Well," he said, "to cut a long story short, the next day after this came the solicitor himself who had sent the brief—a big, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman: you should have seen him, Edith. It seems he had heard my philippic in the court, had taken a very unreasonable fancy to my style of talking, and came to express his opinions. I must confess I was glad and grateful for the encouragement. So we sat and talked over the whole case, and arranged how the defence was to be conducted, and he ended by saying, 'The truth is, that trial the other day quite knocked me over. That boy's evidence was splendidly given, and if the jury had been men they would have acquitted the prisoner there and then.' So you see, coz, it was my clerk who really got me this new client, much more than my speech on that occasion. The result is that these people have been sending me constant work to do, and paying me handsomely for it; and in that way I have been introduced to other attorneys, and had briefs from them, as well. I really do think I am now in a fair way to success."

"And this is the manner you try to deserve your success," said Edith, mischievously; "coming down here and wasting your time. I'm ashamed of you, Francis!"

"Oh, this is vacation, or close to the vacation," replied Julian. "And you know what the poet says, 'Something accomplished, something done, has earned a'—little lawn tennis with a charming cousin."

"I don't remember any poetry at all like that," replied his cousin. "And what have you done with this paragon of a boy? I should like to see him."

"Whenever you come to town you shall," said Julian. "You see, I ought to be very grateful to him, for really, as a matter of fact, it is greatly owing to him that I have fallen into this lucky business that I've told you about. He's a boy that attracts everybody. He has such a handsome, lively little face, and such nice manners! I verily believe my good angel has sent him to me, to rescue me from the slough of despond into which I was in great danger of falling for good and all. And the way he's picking up a knowledge of his duties as clerk is wonderful. In fact, he's perfectly invaluable. How I could ever have managed with his musty, rusty old predecessor I can't imagine. I intend to have him educated as much as possible, and he shall make his way in the world."

It was getting late, so they set to work to pick up the balls, and put away the net, and take in their chairs. In all this Julian had, as we need scarcely remark, the lion's share of the work, while his cousin assisted with remarks and valuable advice.

Then, as it was still light, and the beautiful evening tempted them to stay out of doors, they sauntered along through the garden to a green path that led under an old avenue of limes, that breathed forth the fragrance of their leaves on to the cool quiet of the twilight air.

"And so your fortune is made, and we shall never see anything of you until you come down here some day as a judge, sixty years old, and quite bald and ugly," said Edith.

"It won't be my fault, cousin mine," said Julian, "if I don't come down here oftener than I have been in the habit of doing."

"Why, what possible attraction can you find in this slow place?" asked she, putting on an air of wondering simplicity.

But Julian parried the question. Perhaps a person who knew woman's heart better than he did would have been led to guess something from the innocent little remarks his cousin had been making. "I'm sure anybody would be glad," he said, "to stay a few days with so kind and hospitable a man as my uncle."

"Oh, yes," said Edith; "but you needn't take the trouble to praise papa to me."

"What if I should say that I find the chief attraction in his daughter?" asked Julian, bending down and looking at his cousin, till he obliged her to meet his eyes. "Would you be very surprised or very angry at me for saying that?"

Edith looked away, and laughed a merry little laugh, and shook her head. "Oh, no, you may say anything you like. Only I shan't believe it."

This was too provoking. Julian caught hold of one of those small hands, took it in his own, and said seriously: "You might stop chaffing for a little, Edith, I think. I hope you don't imagine that all lawyers are always false and deceitful, and that—that—that they ——"

"Well, what?"

"That they always live and die old bachelors. I wish you would tell me seriously, Edith, not now, but after thinking it over a little indoors, quietly—whether you would ever, when you're a little older than you are now—whether you would ever feel it possible to care a little bit about one who will probably never put on his wig often enough to get bald, and who will certainly never be a judge. If you could and would," went on Julian ardently, "you don't know how unspeakably happy you would make me, and how easy you would make all the labours that I may have to go through in after years."

This was quite a long and serious effort for Francis Julian. And how did his cousin answer him? She did not give him any direct reply just then, but said she had never expected him to say that, and did he really mean it? We need not repeat his protestations in answer to this sceptical remark. He and Edith walked back to the house, and she hardly spoke once, but remained very quiet, till she got to the door. Then she hastily ran up stairs and shut herself into her own room.

That evening Julian heard his fate. Need we say that the young barrister, who had but recently gained a new clerk, and a new patron, and a new interest in his profession, learned, before he retired to rest, that he had also gained a more precious possession than all or any of these—a heart that sympathised with his own, and a love that was tender and true.



A DEVONSHIRE COMBE.

IT is refreshing in these days of express trains and electric telegraphs, to find oneself in a quiet village, where the whistle of the engine, the rush and rattle of the train, have never sounded ; where a railway porter is unseen ; where even the deep cutting and tall white posts, the tunnels, the smoke and the signals, are known only by hearsay to most of the inhabitants. A village which has no weekly paper, no shops, save a few cottages which display in their little windows a pleasing assortment of apples, matches, cotton, and tallow candles. A village where there are no morning calls to be paid, where there is, in fact, nobody to pay them. Where you may wander at will through the valleys or along the coast, without the slightest fear of scandalising any of your acquaintance by the shape of your hat, the thickness of your boots, or the well-worn aspect of your general costume.

O charming village ! land of liberty ! Who would not be happy in your green retreats ?

To such a place my fortunate star guided me. Three valleys meeting near the sea : houses nestling amongst the trees in each of them : an old church : an unpretending school-house : that is all.

A quarter of a mile from the thickest batch of houses is the beach. The sea, open, blue, majestic, rolls its clear, crisp waves upon the pebbles at the foot of the cliffs. These rise high, some red, some white, with veins of gypsum running through them. On their sides are plots of ground cultivated with hard labour by some of the farming people and fishermen. Long trains of donkeys wind up the narrow cliff paths, laden with brown seaweed for manure. This can be collected only at particular tides, and the business of collecting it, "tidal work," as it is called, forms at some seasons an important part of the occupation of the men and boys of Combe St. Winifred.

To the lover of pebbles the beach is an enchanted region. Here he may wander for hours, loading himself with great pieces of green jasper and chalcedony ; often with beautiful wood-and-moss-agates, and even rarer treasures. If he have luck he may light upon some desirable fossil, easily detached from its soft limestone bed. Anemones, too, and pink filmy seaweeds abound.

No enterprising naturalists with zoophyte knives and orthodox tin pails invade the quietude of Combe beach. Only now and then you see a little fishing-boat put off from the shore, or a knot of "Preventive men," telescopes in hand, appear in front of their little salmon-coloured houses. You may, perhaps, hear the voices of children gathering water-cresses in the brook which rests here after its quick

run through the valley; or of the men and boys—"cleave-farmers," as they are called—at work upon the cliffs; but there are no other signs of life.

Yet the solitude is not oppressive. The dash of the waves at your feet, and the roll of the pebbles which they carry back as they recede, brace and invigorate the nervous system; a flavour of brine mingles with your thoughts, and the mind receives an increased tone of healthy vigour.

You sit down on the old accustomed bit of beach, which you learn to love more and more every day. No one is very near you, and you have the shore almost to yourself. Spread out before you is the sea, calm and placid. The little waves creep up and curl over with a busy whisper at your feet. The sun has not long set, and pink and golden clouds are reflected in the water. By-and-by the bright colours fade; the sky fills with a tender bluish haze; then a star appears, "in pale glory;" then another, and another; the breeze against your cheek grows chilly. You look round; lights are shining in the distant houses, and when you turn again to the sea it is dull, almost leaden. The rising moon casts a bright track of light across the water.

In such moments as these one feels what a tumultuous hurry this life of ours is; what a strife of wills; what a struggle for worldly advancement; what a whirl of feverish longings and strivings after some never-to-be-achieved happiness; what a constant warfare between good and evil in our hearts. And then the sight of that calm unruffled ocean quiets one; we are soothed in listening to its solemn chant: for the "grand diapason" has more power over the spirit than the finest music that was ever composed. It goes to the very heart and root of our being. It is the work of the Creator speaking directly to the soul of man, placing us almost into immediate communion with the eternal and the invisible.

You take your way back to the village through a winding lane, lighted by the glowworms. The country folks would scarcely envy you your walk, for in this remote neighbourhood they are sadly superstitious, and believe and relate many a wonderful tale of ghosts and pixies.

A curious story of supernatural agency is related by one of the oldest parishioners, who heard it from his mother, to whom it was told by his grandmother, who knew the hero: thus establishing its claim to an antiquity of at least two hundred years.

A Combe labourer was one day ploughing alone in a field, when he heard a doleful voice behind him complaining: "I've broken my peel! I've broken my peel!" an instrument not unlike a shovel, used for putting cakes into the oven. The man looked about in all directions, but could see no one, though the voice continued to lament. At last, being a good-natured fellow, he answered, "Give it to me, and I'll mend it." Whereupon the "peel," with a hammer and nails, was laid by invisible hands in the furrow before him, and

taken away as soon as he had repaired it. On the following day he found in the same furrow a freshly-baked cake—the pixie's acknowledgment of his kindness.

Half-way up one of the valleys, about a mile from the village, stands a handsome stone house, which, with its two wings and the farm buildings at the back, forms a complete quadrangle. Though now only a farm, it was in former days a goodly mansion, the residence of an old family whose arms are still displayed on a stone shield over the doorway, and whose many monuments form a conspicuous feature in the parish church.

The house is rather solitary, standing on the slope of a hill, of which the upper part is thickly wooded, and is the resort of white owls, whose dismal hooting forms a fitting accompaniment to the moaning wind which sighs round the angles of the farm buildings on tempestuous nights. Here a headless lady is said to have appeared, many years ago, dressed in the fashion of a bygone age, and walking with echoing steps through a long dark passage, while she paused occasionally to rap at the doors which open out of it with the long-handled broom she carried in her hand. This continued night after night, until someone was found brave enough to follow the apparition, which rewarded his courage by discovering to him some hidden treasure, and then vanished. Some years afterwards the same ghost reappeared, revealed more treasure, and has never since been heard of. Who she was, and when and how she lost her head, remains a mystery; but the story obtains full belief in the neighbourhood.

I have spoken of the "cleave farming" as an important part of the occupation of the men and boys in this district. The combe women, also, have their distinctive employment. Much of the beautiful fabric called Honiton lace is made in this and the neighbouring parishes. As you walk through the villages the rattle of the bobbins sounds pleasantly through many an open doorway, and looking in you see one or more women with their round pillows on their knees, busily engaged in lace-making. The lace for royal wedding dresses is generally made in this district. When the pattern is designed it is divided as much as possible, and the various sprigs are apportioned to different workers. Thus, in a piece of lace consisting of groups of flowers, one woman will make only rosebuds, another only small leaves, and a third, perhaps, full-blown roses, but neither will have any idea of the pattern to be formed with these pieces. This precaution is necessary in all new patterns to prevent the design being copied. When the sprigs are finished, they are fastened together by the best workers, under the immediate superintendence of the lace merchant, and then the fabric is complete.

Most of the young girls of Combe are sent very early to the "lace-schools," where they seem to work cheerfully enough. They have two holidays a year, generally on the same day of the month: the days on which they begin and on which they leave off working by

candlelight. The autumn holiday is known as "nutting-day," while that in the spring is supposed to be devoted to "washing the candlesticks."

Climbing a steep hill from the village, you find yourself in a wild region called "The Pits," overlooking a deep valley, and commanding a distant view of the sea. Here, as the name implies, there were originally limestone pits, which, though now no longer worked, impart to the ground a picturesque and broken appearance, which is a peculiar characteristic of the St. Winifred hills. Up and down you go, over tall hillocks covered with short, stunted grass, and adorned with great tufts of marjoram, round which the brilliant butterflies are hovering—for Combe is a great place for insects.

Sometimes your way is shaded by a graceful ash-tree, its trunk clasped round with ivy, and its clear-cut foliage casting flickering lights and shadows across your path. Sometimes you turn aside to pull the tempting pink-brown clusters from a thicket of nut-bushes festooned with waving clematis; or you suddenly find yourself on the brink of some old deserted lime-kiln, the entrance half filled up with stones and wild flowers, and honeysuckles and brambles climbing down the sides.

The woods, too, are beautiful. Whether we wander through them in early spring, filling our hands with the daffodils and sweet white violets which grow there so abundantly, and watching the merry little rabbits at their gambols; or later, when the boughs are laced together by the "luscious woodbine and sweet eglantine;" or when the hop has flung its graceful tendrils across the hedgerows, and the trees have donned their many-coloured garments, and the dying leaves fall solemnly, not sadly, down, "each to its rest beneath its parent tree."

Beautiful and unsophisticated as Combe St. Winifred now is, how long may we hope it will remain so? Already the indefatigable tourist scents it out; a stranger with a knapsack on his back and a stout stick in his hand, is no longer gazed at as an unknown monster. Artists have come there to sketch the quaint old doorways and picturesque orchards with which it abounds. A few more summers may make great changes in our village; improving it perhaps in many ways, but necessarily taking from it the simplicity which is now so charming; and sweeping away its faith in wonderful white-witches, and charms, and pixies, with the relentless besom of nineteenth century common-sense.

Whatever St. Winifred may become in future years, its later charms can hardly equal those of the tender, quaint originality which makes it now a picturesque and perfect pattern of a Devonshire Combe.

S. M. G.

“WANTED, A COOK.”

CHAPTER I.

RUNNING AWAY FROM HER.

I MAY as well say at once that my mother—the best and most indulgent of women—had sent me, Reginald Hunter, to travel on the Continent before I settled down in life. I was an only son, had just left college, and was *thinking* about the Bar as a suitable profession; but a most discriminating uncle having left me a good fortune, I was not very anxious about future briefs. Still, I was not to enjoy the good man’s money till I was twenty-five years old, as he had erroneously considered that age more suitable for his heir than the generally recognised and legal twenty-one.

My knowledge of French not being great, I usually found it safer to speak English at the various hotels. Thus it happened that at Cologne, on a certain July day, I marched boldly into the Hôtel d’Albion and requested in English to be shown a good room looking out on the river. The landlord bowed low and said:

“Exactly so, sire.” Yet I fancied there was an anxious look on his face as I followed him up the stairs. We passed the first floor, then the second: but here I made a stand.

“I am not going up higher,” I said, with true British doggedness.

“Veery sorry, sire, but these floor is engaged. The first floor engaged, the second floor engaged, and the third floor is full all but this room.” Thereupon he threw open the door of what in reality was a small dressing-room.

“Beautiful view, sire, spacious, and not in the sun.”

“Very well,” I said, resignedly; “as it is only for one night, I must put up with it.”—What on earth did the fellow mean by having all his rooms occupied?

“What name, sire?” he next said, and I gave him my card and left him to fill up the customary form. After reading “Hunter” out in various pronunciations, he remarked blandly: “There is a letter for you, sire; I will send it up,” and presently I was refreshed with the sight of honest English handwriting. It was a letter from my mother.

I drew a dusty red-velvet arm-chair to the window, and with the soft summer breeze blowing in from the Rhine read the home news. I will not record all that was in it, because fond mothers do write a good many things which cannot be repeated; but this paragraph amused me not a little:

“I have been in great trouble, dear Reggie, with the servants. Yesterday cook gave warning because Sir Henry Seymour’s footman has jilted her, and she says it will break her heart to see daily the

house where he ‘inhabits.’ Then Jane, you know, the pretty house-maid, said if cook went she must go. I think this was her only reason; but the parlour-maid declares she can’t possibly stay as I am always ‘changing.’ It is the first time this has ever happened, but really I am so worried that do see, my dear boy, if you can’t make enquiries about a foreign cook for me, French or German. At all events, they could not immediately fall in love if they did not know a word of English.”

Fancy asking *me* to look out for a cook! The dear mother must have taken leave of her senses.

I looked at my watch; it was six o’clock, and table d’hôte was in half an hour. So I determined to put off going out till after dinner, and prepared to make myself as clean as foreign ways permitted.

At this moment I heard a clatter of many footsteps on the stairs; next, the music of endless voices, high pitched and sonorous sounds mingled together. At first, I fancied the house must be on fire, or, perhaps, the cathedral; but suddenly the truth flashed upon me. There could be no doubt about it. I was in for a “Cook’s Personally Conducted Tour.” Abominable! Why should they travel where I was travelling? They would eat everything up, and, worst of all, they would be at the table d’hôte.

I went down to the dining-room with no pleasant feeling, and awaited their arrival with undisguised annoyance. On they came, clattering down the stairs—men, women, young ladies, young gentlemen; all in the highest of spirits, and, as I had foreseen, ready to eat up everything. A waiter assigned me a seat, and I found myself between the last of the “Cooks” and a very deaf old lady travelling with a companion. I had intended to devote myself to the old lady, but was forced to give up the attempt, and seek for some amusement on my other side. The tongues were soon unloosed, and would have drowned the noise of a battle, I believe. At the head of the table sat the conductor; a clever-looking man, who kept the two “young ladies” at his side in fits of laughter. But the chief of the conversation was kept up by a little red-haired man, whose every word elicited roars of merriment. The young ladies nudged each other and giggled, exclaiming, “Oh, doctor!” and the matrons panted out, “Really, doctor, you’re too bad; you have such a curious way of saying things!”

“It’s an awful shame,” I said to myself, “for these sort of people to travel in such numbers. One can have no chance of conversing with interesting foreigners.” But at this point I was startled by my neighbour, a stout, high-coloured Britisher, turning towards me with the remark:

“I hope you’re thinking of joining our party, sir?”

“No, thank you; I’m going another way.” (At least, I fervently hoped so.)

“Perhaps you don’t like a good party. That’s like my Janet here; she’s so quiet there’s no getting her to say anything.”

"Janet" was, I presumed, seated beyond the portly man, for I could not catch a glimpse of her. Not that I was at all anxious to do so.

At last the dinner was over. I rose, hoping I should enjoy my next meal better, but in my hurry to get away I trod on a lady's dress. She was in front of me, and whilst my foot was on her skirt she tried to move on. In a moment I heard the noise of a rent. Now, few accidents are more terrible for a man than when he tears some part of a lady's attire, for it generally brings him into dreadful disgrace with the fair one, and he is very fortunate if he escapes with only a frown. I began to stammer an apology as the lady turned round, and at that moment my stout neighbour came up, and said, in a loud voice :

"Well, I declare, Janet ! It looks, my dear, as if that dress was done for." Of course he laughed at this last joke, and I looked up into Janet's face, dreading what I should see. My words of apology died on my lips from sheer surprise, for there stood before me a tall, graceful girl, with a face so soft and beautiful that I at once thought of some Madonna I had lately seen at Antwerp. She was fair, with bright, though *not* golden hair, grave blue eyes, and a gentle, delicate mouth. So this, then, was "Janet," and one of the "Cooks." It seemed impossible ; but as this was the case, I at last stammered the apology which had been delayed.

"It does not matter, thank you," she said, in a refined educated voice ; "it is only the gathers." Then I hastened away feeling that nature had committed some extraordinary mistake in having made Janet one of Cook's personally conducted tourists !

After dinner I sauntered about the town, visited the cathedral, had a peep at the saintly bones, and caught myself wondering whether the "party" had done it all, and what "Janet" had thought of it. But of course she must be like the rest of them, and most likely stared at the sights without taking them in.

Over my evening cigar I wrote a letter to my mother and expressed my strong disapproval of her cook's conduct, but added my utter inability to pick up another in these regions. It was most aggravating that just as I wrote these words Cook's party would come into my head, and after the party "Janet." What on earth did it matter to me what this girl's history might be ? So I rang my bell and said I must be called in time to go on by the boat.

The next morning I went early on board, chose a good seat and made myself thoroughly comfortable ; when what was my indignation and surprise to see a rush, a struggle, and then to hear the sonorous tones of the conductor, saying :

"There is plenty of time, ladies and gentlemen ; no need to hurry."

I had fondly hoped that I had left these people behind ; but no ; they, too, were going up the Rhine, and they too were trying to secure the best seats. I got up, half intending to go back to the hotel and wait for the next day, but at that minute I saw my stout neighbour

looking about for a camp stool. Next I saw Janet look up and down the boat in a shy, bewildered manner to find a seat if possible; I saw her approach my end; and then—was I mad?—I rose quickly and actually offered my seat to one of the enemy. Janet looked up at me, and her simplicity—perhaps, too, those blue eyes—melted my anger.

“Please do not let me deprive you of your seat,” she said; “I can find another; or if not, I can go down stairs.”

“Indeed you must not. You will miss half the view, and we are going to have a perfect day.”

“That’s what I’ve been telling Janet,” said the stout man. “Half the battle on these occasions is to get a good seat and stick to it. Sit down, my dear; I always say young gentlemen ought to be polite to the ladies.”

Janet blushed scarlet, and not wishing to increase her awkwardness I moved away and sauntered up and down the deck, gazing more at my enemies than at the view. Indeed, the noise they made prevented much sublime meditation. At every turn I took I also caught sight of Janet’s graceful figure. She sat alone and silent, for her companion had soon joined the merrier party. At last my inclination got the better of my prudence. I went up to her, pretending I wished to see some special spot through my glasses.

“I hope you find your seat comfortable?” I said.

“Yes, thank you. Please let me return it to you.”

I refused, of course, and then took the opportunity of observing her more closely. She was strangely beautiful, but not of a common order of beauty. I was certain that the other “Cooks” thought a great deal more of a stout, high-coloured, large-eyed girl, who was one of their party and appeared to be very talkative. But this shy Janet was evidently far too much above them to be popular. What could be the circumstances that had made her what she was?

“I suppose your father often takes you abroad,” I said.

“Mr. Smith has been here before, but I have not,” was the reply.

Janet Smith! I was struck dumb. “Smith” seemed such an inappropriate name for this beautiful girl. After a time I started another subject.

“I am so sorry I tore your dress yesterday; you must think men very stupid.”

“It did not matter,” she returned. “I mended it early this morning, before I went to the cathedral.”

“Did you go with all the Coo—all your party,” I added hastily. Janet blushed again, and I could have knocked out my brains at my stupidity. And yet after all Janet *was* a “Cook.”

“No, I went alone; there are some things one likes to see by oneself; a cathedral for instance, or a beautiful view.”

“Certainly, unless accompanied by a very suitable companion.”

Janet was not to be drawn on by light conversation. She did not answer this remark, but looked straight before her. Of whom was she thinking? I tried again.

"See, that is the famous Lorelei; in a book I was reading the other day, it gave one all the curious legends of these shores." Janet smiled, and by degrees I found out she knew a good deal more about the "curious legends" than I did, so we talked on on this safe subject till Mr. Smith reappeared, sending his voice before him.

"Well, Janet, my dear, I see you have some good company."

Janet's face lost all its animation; she was in a minute the quiet beautiful girl I had seen the evening before.

I drew away, almost annoyed at having so much enjoyed our talk, annoyed at the unusual interest I felt in this stranger. I, who had frequented the best society, and had seen dozens of pretty girls who had not made half the impression on me that Janet Smith was now making. I determined to have nothing more to do with her; so I carefully avoided her, and seating myself at some distance, said I should now thoroughly enjoy the view.

At Bingen I heard a rush, and before I was aware of the cause I saw that the conductor had marshalled out his party with the speed and precision a general might have envied. I had only just time to catch a glimpse of a graceful figure and bright hair, before we had left "Cook's" party behind on terra firma, and were proceeding on to Mayence in blessed silence, yet on my part with a slight feeling of disappointment.

When I reached Mayence it was late. The red glow left by the sun was intensely beautiful, for against the crimson and orange background the black hulks and masts of the Rhine boats were drawn out sharp and clear. But what are beauties that one cannot share with another human being? I hurried on to an hotel and asked for a bed.

"For a single gentleman, sir?" asked the master, looking at my small portmanteau.

"Of course. And have you any dinner for me?"

"It is going on now," was the reply, "if you will be good enough to follow the waiter."

This I was only too happy to do, feeling thankful that mine host spoke capital English, and that I could make him understand my wishes. The waiter threw open the door. I caught sight of a long table, lit with grand chandeliers, of a multitude of faces; I heard a great clatter of knives and forks and human tongues; I saw an empty seat and was hurried into it; and then turning round found that my neighbour was—Mr. Smith! I was in for the "Cooks" again!

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed. "You here again!"

"Why, yes; we did a little land travelling. Our conductor knows that enough is as good as a feast, and we had a good spell of that boat. There is a good deal of sameness on a river. It was uncommonly nice to stretch our legs, wasn't it, Janet?"

I bent forward and bowed to Janet. How refreshing it was to see her face in that unsympathetic crowd, but I noticed that her manner towards me was changed. Did she resent my having shown my dislike

of her surroundings? Surely there was some strange fate in this. Why, quite by chance, had I hit upon this same hotel? And above all, why was I so glad to see *her* again—glad and angry too—angry because I was glad? The “party” appeared to me more noisy, more uninteresting than before, and she more beautiful, more queenly, more refined by contrast.

Instead of retiring to my own room I followed the “Cooks” into the salon. The balcony which ran along outside the house was soon crowded with them, and this made me suggest to Mr. Smith a moon-light walk.

“A capital idea, sir! I have no doubt the whole party would like it immensely.”

“Plague take the party!” I muttered, but alas! too audibly, for I found Janet at my elbow and with a look on her face I had not seen there before. She hastened to turn towards Mr. Smith and said in a cold voice:

“I am tired now, and shall go to bed,” and she moved away from me. At that minute I would have gone out en troupe with the “Cooks,” if Janet would have looked pleased. I managed to intercept her, however, before she reached the salon door.

“Are you going on to-morrow, Miss Smith? I mean there cannot be much to see at Mayence.” Janet turned towards me with a little look of surprise on her face. Then, with evident effort, she said in a chilling tone:

“I do not know what our party are going to do to-morrow. Good night.” And, with a motion which a queen might have made when displeased by some petty subject, Janet swept past me, leaving me piqued and indignant with her, and angry with myself.

One thing I determined that night: I would stay here at Mayence till the “Cooks” were well out of the way. Those sort of people always raced over the Continent. Afterwards I could easily enquire what route they took, and then I could avoid it. So I might regain the quiet and contented frame of mind I had before I met the party. Good heavens, was I, Reginald Hunter, in love with “Janet Smith,” one of Cook’s Personally Conducted Tourists? The idea was preposterous. I laughed aloud, fancying what my mother would say if I wrote her this piece of news.

And yet—confound it—I dreamt of Janet that night. Getting up early the next morning, after a disturbed slumber, I started out for a long excursion, and telling a small French garçon I met on the doorstep that I should not be home till evening, hastened away for my walk.

When I came back late at night the Frenchman was still on the doorstep. He bowed and seized my stick and coat, giving me this gratuitous piece of information:

“La maison est très tranquille ce soir, monsieur; les Coques sont partis.”

CHAPTER II.

RUNNING AFTER HER.

STRANGE perversity of human nature! No sooner was I quite sure of being freed from my enemies than I felt a strong desire to run after them, just for the purpose of asking Janet to forgive me. This was so intensely foolish that I tried to forget the whole episode; tried by a great deal of sight-seeing to drive Janet's image out of my head. And yet why was it that I could so well recollect every feature of her face, and call to mind even the turn of her head and the sweet expression of her deep blue eyes? I still kept wondering at the incongruity of that girl with her surroundings.

Never did a week appear so long to me as that week at Mayence. I was quite sick of it and of the Rhine: heartily glad when I once more moved on, perfectly sure I should not again meet the party—unless, perhaps, on their return journey.

About a fortnight after this I found myself at Lucerne, at the Hotel Swan. As I was idling about the salon I chanced upon a printed paper, and, in large, imposing letters, read, "Cook's Personally Conducted Tour." Then there followed an account of the places they would pass through. I examined the dates. Yes, this was the tour of my identical enemies. I further noted that on a certain day in August they would have seen *all* the beauties of Switzerland, and would pause one day at Geneva before returning home, *viâ* Paris.

Geneva is a very pleasant place just about this time, I said to myself; I may as well go there as anywhere else. But I had only just time to reach it by that special August day. Not that it mattered in the least my arriving by that date, but if I did, it would be a curious coincidence. And let me own to you, reader, that that curious coincidence did take place; for I entered bright, sunny Geneva on the same day that the Hôtel d'Angleterre was expecting a large inroad of visitors. I sent on my luggage by the hotel omnibus, and determined to walk about till nearer the dinner hour.

As I was sauntering along, looking into the shop windows and trying to choose something worthy of the dear mother at home, I happened to pass a pastrycook's shop. How delicious the cakes looked, I thought. And so thought, evidently, a little, curiously-attired lady, who was gazing fondly at the eatables. As I paused she turned round, and I at once recognized one of the "Cooks!" So they were come, and had arrived before me! Pray, reader, do not smile if I own that I at once felt quite friendly towards this old woman. I took off my hat, made a polite bow, and said I believed I had met her at Cologne, and other places.

"Ah! to be sure," she said, anxiously. "Could you tell me, sir, what o'clock it is?"

"Just four," I said, taking out my watch.

“And dinner is not till seven,” she sighed. “These foreign ways are most uncomfortable, I think. There’s nothing like one’s comfortable cup of tea at five o’clock, as all good Christians have in England.”

“Why not make up for it by these tempting morsels; though, as you say, they are not worth a cup of English tea.”

“Do you think one may?” she asked eagerly, looking up at me gravely. “You see, our conductor does for us altogether, and I don’t know, I am sure, whether it’s in the agreement.”

I nearly laughed aloud, but fearing Janet might suddenly appear round the corner, I refrained.

“I am sure every Englishman is free to spend his money as he likes, and with it you may certainly buy what you like.”

“You really think so?” Then her face brightened, whilst I ushered her into the shop, and asked for what she required; and she quite cheered up as “*tourtes de cerises*” and “*gateaux aux éclairs*” disappeared.

“Are the other Coo—the rest of your party at the hotel?” I inquired, carelessly.

“Oh, yes, sir, they are resting. We don’t go round the town till to-morrow morning, and we’ve only Paris to do after this,” she added, with a sigh of relief. “I really don’t believe I would have come if I’d known the tramping about we had to do—and then none of the meals regular. It’s very well for young people; it was my cousin Joe that persuaded me. He came home flush from India, and said he’d treat me. But there ——”

“I dare say Mr. and Miss Smith enjoyed it,” said I, interrupting her.

“Well, certainly Mr. Smith, he always seemed to enjoy everything. But Miss—dear me, Smith isn’t the name. Well, anyhow, I dare say they’re both repenting it now, for poor Mr. Smith quite broke down two days ago. Two days, was it? Well, really, sir, I quite lose count of days with this going about.”

“Is Mr. Smith ill, then?”

“I don’t really know what he is now, sir. I shouldn’t be surprised to hear he was in his coffin, for we left him in a dirty bit of a town that wasn’t fit for anyone to be ill in.”

“And his daughter—is she with him?”

“She’s his niece. Oh, yes, she’s with him, but she’s quite another sort—not fit to rough it in that dirty place.”

“But what was the name of the place?” I asked, trying not to show my eagerness. “And why were they left alone?”

“They called it Eagle, or some such name. And as to stopping—why, sir, Cook’s parties *never* stop. If somebody drops out, why they do. You see it’s all contract work.”

She had finished her cakes, and I left her in haste. One idea possessed me. Janet was alone with that man—that uncle; she

might be in difficulty, knowing no one, perhaps not able to speak French. After all, I was not altogether wrong—Janet was not his daughter. I rushed back to the hotel, paid what they asked of me, and took the next train to Aigle. I should get there that evening, and might, perhaps, be of some use. All this time I kept saying to myself that, of course, *anyone* hearing of a young lady left in a foreign land, with a sick relative, would do what I was doing. My mother, I felt sure, would be the first to suggest going to see after them, &c., &c. It is curious how difficult it is to be honest with oneself. I did not ask if I should have done the same had Janet been other than she was.

It was quite dark when I reached Aigle. Moreover, the fine day had clouded over, and it was now pouring with rain. I did not know what hotel Mr. Smith might be in, so that I entered the nearest one, asked if a "Mr. Smith" was staying there, and was answered in the negative.

I hastened out again into the rain, and tried another hotel in the town. There was no Mr. Smith there; most likely he was at the big hotel, a mile out of the town. Courageously I sallied forth, though before I reached my journey's end I heartily wished I had waited for the morning. I arrived at last, wet to the skin, and as I was forced to put up there, changed my dripping things before I asked the question once more. "Was there a Mr. Smith in the hotel?"

Certainly; a stout gentleman who had been ill and a young lady with him. This surely was my Mr. Smith; so I found a card and told the waiter to ask if I might see the lady. I waited in feverish impatience until the waiter came back and begged me to follow him.

I was shown into a small sitting-room lit up with gas; it was empty, but there was a work-basket on the table and several books. I took one up; it was "*Hyperion*;" and this sent my thoughts back to that day on the Rhine when Janet had been so animated about the old legends. In two minutes a side door opened and Janet stood before me. She looked so composed, so self-possessed, that for an instant I fancied our former meetings had been a dream and that we were really old English acquaintances and friends.

"Pray forgive me, Miss Smith, but I fancied—I mean I heard your uncle was ill, and I thought as I was in this neighbourhood that I might be of some service to you. It is so inconvenient in these out-of-the-way places to get what one wants."

She did not hold out her hand; and, looking at her, I feared she had not forgiven me.

"Thank you, Mr. Hunter," she said, stiffly; "my uncle has been ill, but he is a little better now."

"But is there nothing I can do?" I said, eagerly. She was, she must have been a little touched, although she only replied:

"I am sure my uncle will be very much obliged when I tell him you called, but we can have no claim upon your—courtesy." This last

word was brought out with a little effort, yet she looked more fascinating than ever.

"Do pray believe me when I say that I shall be delighted to do anything I can for you. I really mean what I say." My words and the tone of my voice must have expressed some of my feeling, for suddenly Janet became cold and stern.

"I can assure you that I require nothing. Perhaps you forget that we are part of the obnoxious crowd you found so troublesome." She smiled now, whilst I felt quite abashed. Still I could not help fully recognising that had Janet been found among a troop of itinerant players she would still have been a queen among women. Before I found anything to reply she held out her hand as if to make up for her words, saying:

"Good night, Mr. Hunter; I fear my uncle must be wanting me. Will you excuse me?" Then she was gone, and all I could do was to return to my room and meditate how I could best prove to Janet that I would do anything for her. Alas! there was no hiding the fact now: I was desperately in love with this mysterious Janet. I despised myself for it, and my only consolation was that she despised me too.

I woke up the next morning determined to ingratiate myself with Mr. Smith, but for fear of appearing troublesome I waited till ten o'clock before enquiring of the waiter how Mr. Smith was reported to be this morning.

"Better, monsieur. The Mr. Smith and the Miss went away this morning early—the doctor said this air of the city not good for him; so they have gone up to the mountains to a place called Callaz."

What! Janet gone again! Had she done it on purpose? But no, I could not thus far flatter myself. She had only not thought it worth while to tell me their plans.

"I am going to Callaz to-day, garçon. When does the diligence start?"

"At four hours of the afternoon, monsieur."

"Then take my place on the outside," I said; feeling decidedly downhearted, and not a little cross that I should still be intent on following a girl who managed so well to run away from me.

"At all events, Janet shall see I mean what I say," I muttered. And in this frame of mind I whiled away the hours till it was time to start for Callaz.

CHAPTER III.

HOW I STOPPED RUNNING.

THE diligence arrived at last at Callaz, and I descended in front of an enlarged chalet, which I was told was the only hotel of the place. It stood half way up a slope, and behind it towered a mountain.

On walking up to the door the first person I saw was Mr. Smith, seated in the verandah ; but I looked round in vain for any appearance of Janet. There was no coldness at least on Mr. Smith's part towards me, for he received me quite warmly.

"Well, sir, I call this a curious coincidence. It's wonderful, as I said to Janet yesterday, when she told me you had arrived, how friends do meet in these outlandish places. And then to think of your turning up here ! You find me quite a sufferer, Mr. Hunter. It's the gout ; but there's something else, that I don't tell Janet about. It's heart too—that's what the real mischief is."

"I am sure Miss Smith is anxious," I said.

"Bless me, she isn't a Smith ; she doesn't take at all after our race. She was a Morton. Her father married my sister when she was quite young. Young people are foolish, Mr. Hunter ; but my sister Jane was the prettiest girl at Payneton. Mr. Morton was a clergyman ; a very eccentric man ; as full of learning as an egg's full of meat, but no common sense, not a grain. Poor Jane died when Janet was born. She wasn't married above a year, and I lost sight of Mr. Morton and the little one. He was not of our sort, but related to the grand folks, and so brought up his daughter after his own fashion. However, he died at a most inconvenient time, sir. Janet was seventeen, and he didn't leave her a penny, but debts in plenty. He wasn't a bad man either : but, there, it's not our way of providing for children. Well, the grand people didn't want Janet when they saw how she was left, and when I heard of it I came forward. I settled up the father's affairs, and then offered Janet a home. I wasn't at all the thing, and wanted some one to look after me. So Janet came, and a better girl there can't be, though she never gets used to our ways quite. As the doctor ordered me here, I fancied we should be merrier coming with Mr. Cook's party : but it's not her way. She seems a deal happier with me alone, up in these quiet parts."

I was deeply interested in hearing all this. After all, I was not mistaken : Janet was a lady, and had been brought up as one.

"Where is Miss Morton now ?" I asked.

"Well, she ought to be in, for she went up the mountain some time ago, to see the sun set, or something. She needed some fresh air, I told her, for really last night she seemed quite moped."

I rose, saying that as Mr. Smith was anxious, I would go in quest of his niece. Before he could refuse, I hastened away.

More than half way up the mountain was covered with short turf, at first intermixed with flowers and brushwood. Then these ceased, and one came upon overgrown boulders and loose stones, enlivened by the Alpine rose. Further up again vegetation ceased entirely, and the mountain crest rose in bare ruggedness into the sky. Janet would certainly not have reached to that region. She must be seeing the sun set from some grassy slope, for the sky was cloudless. I hastened on. But I found the climbing much more difficult than I

expected, not having waited to provide myself with an alpenstock. I planted my nailed boots firmly into the turf, and progressed steadily.

At last I reached a kind of ledge, or hollow, and turning round for a moment beheld the great snow range of the Mont Blanc, and further back the St. Bernard group flooded in the wonderful crimson glow well known to Swiss travellers, a perfect earthly Paradise. Was Janet seeing it too? I felt sure she would appreciate it. But where was she; had I missed her? Above me rose a very steep bit of climbing and over that another ledge.

Suddenly I saw, high above me, the flutter of a dress. I could not quite distinguish who it was, yet felt sure it must be Janet. I waved my arm, and then, whether she was startled or whether she slipped over something, I know not, but at that minute I saw her fall. She made a violent effort to save herself, but let go her alpenstock, which rolled rapidly away from her. Then, losing all control over her movements, she half slipped, half rolled down the fearful declivity.

I was some way off. Also she was not just above me, but somewhat to the right, where no second ledge would stop her course. In an instant I had made up my mind. I rushed on as fast as possible in a downward direction to the right. In this way I might perhaps reach some point where I could stop her descent. If not, she might be killed or seriously injured by striking against some boulder. I flew on, keeping my eyes on her. Now and then she was partially stopped by some small impediment, but again precipitated downward by the struggles she made to regain her footing.

It takes long to describe, but it did not take many moments to reach a spot below, only just in time to catch at her dress. But alas! I had not had time to secure my own footing; I was dragged by her weight and fell, still retaining my grasp, however. A violent effort, in which every muscle of my body seemed to be exerted, and then I managed to cling to the ground, and throwing out my left arm clutched at a boulder. We were saved; no fear now of again slipping, for curiously enough, against this very boulder Janet's alpenstock had been caught. I secured it, and planting it firmly in the ground, managed to raise Janet. She was for a few moments quite stunned, but happily had not fainted. Very soon she looked up and recognised me.

"Thank you," she said simply; "it was so very horrid going down like that and not being able to stop oneself." She shuddered a little, then with a great effort she rose, but was trembling too much to walk alone. She was thus forced to take hold of my arm and we proceeded very slowly with the help of the alpenstock. I do not think I objected at all to this state of things; I felt so proud of having been of use to her; so proud of having her hand on my arm.

Before we had reached the end of the slope she was forced to sit down and rest, and then I was able to say a few words.

"I cannot imagine how you ventured so high—and alone too."

"I was led on further than I meant to go ; it seemed easy to climb. Besides, everything was so beautiful."

"You might have told me you were leaving Aigle last night," I said suddenly, in an injured tone. Janet looked up with a smile.

"I did not see the use," she replied.

"But if I said that I saw the use?"

"Then you should not ; you must not say that. Oh, Mr. Hunter, indeed you should not have come on, because you are different from us. It is *us*, for though I have been brought up elsewhere, yet my uncle has been so very good to me—so very good—that in future his home shall be my home and his people my people."

I was deeply touched by Janet's noble nature ; it only made me feel how infinitely superior she was to myself, and that her heart agreed with her outward appearance.

We were obliged to proceed, Janet fearing her uncle would be anxious. We found him in a long corridor the end of which had been given up to him, it being quieter than the common sitting-room. Janet went up to him in a gentle, affectionate manner, as he anxiously asked what had delayed her.

"Dear uncle, I missed my footing and—I think Mr. Hunter saved my life."

Mr. Smith poured forth profuse thanks and enquiries, so that I was forced to spend the evening with them, whereupon I found out what a kind, sensible man Janet's uncle was. How was it I could ever have thought him a troublesome neighbour? When he retired to rest I was left a few minutes with Janet.

"I hope you will believe in future that I am willing to be of use, Miss Morton—and that I shall not find you gone when I wake up to-morrow morning !" This time Janet was not repelling in her voice.

"Perhaps it would be better if we found *you* gone."

"Will you let me be the judge?" and as she did not answer I need hardly say that I did not pack up my portmanteau that night. All my doubts and misgivings had flown away. I loved Janet, and I fancied that this evening she was not quite so indifferent to me.

I had just fallen into a sound slumber that night when I was roused by a loud knocking at my door. "Would I get up and come to Mr. Smith at once?" I hurried on my clothes and was soon at Mr. Smith's door, where Janet met me, looking pale and frightened.

"Oh, Mr. Hunter, forgive me for sending for you, but you said—I went in to give my uncle some medicine at one o'clock, and I called him, but he did not move. I fear he has fainted."

I went in with her to her uncle's room ; the mistress and master of the hotel were there, both being most kind and attentive.

Janet and I went up to his bedside ; I touched his hand ; it was cold as death. I looked in the faces of those about me and then I saw that honest, kind-hearted Mr. Smith would never wake again in this world. Janet burst into tears when she saw the look on my face.

“He was so good, so kind to me,” she repeated. “Dear, dear uncle !”

The funeral was very quiet, for Mr. Smith had few relations. His married sister’s husband arrived the day of the funeral, much perplexed at finding himself in a foreign land and having a young lady to see after. I wondered how he ever managed to reach Callaz. Janet let me arrange everything for her, and the English ladies at the chalet were very kind to her. It would have been difficult to be otherwise to the gentle, beautiful girl who appeared so lonely.

We learnt to know each other during that week as we could have done under no other circumstances. And when all was over and Mr. Matthew told me he must go back at once, and would give Janet a home till something “turned up,” I determined to see if that “something” might not be—I hardly dared to say the word even to myself.

“Will you come and see the sunset once more on this last evening?” I said to Janet. “I promise to see that you do not again fall.” Janet was sitting in the verandah, looking sad and dejected. She had tried to avoid me all day, but now she was forced to answer.

“Yes—if you wish it.”

When we reached the scene of the accident we sat down, and both of us turned our eyes towards the glorious snow ranges which would soon be flooded with ruby light.

“Miss Morton, why have you avoided me all day?” I said at last, but she only turned her head away.

“Janet,” I said, eagerly, making a desperate plunge and taking her hand almost forcibly. “Janet, won’t you say that you are a little sorry to leave—this place?”

“I am sorry—very sorry.”

“Will you not come back next year and see this same beautiful sight?”

“Next year?”

“Yes, with me. Janet, have I not said that I love you in everything but in words? Those I dared not say for fear of your looking at me as you once did. But now I must speak—Janet, Janet, if you will give me leave, I promise that you shall never regret having come here.”

Janet turned towards me with a glowing face, she knew what I meant now, and yet she hesitated.

“But, Mr. Hunter, some day *you* may regret having fallen in with one of Cook’s tourists.”

“No, indeed, Janet, *never*, if only you will let *me* be in future the *personal conductor* !”

I have not much to add, except that I travelled back with Mr. Matthew and Janet, and that she and I found so much to say to each other, that I am sure the poor man thought us very dull company.

We parted in London—she to accept Mr. Matthew’s hospitality till I could arrange “something” for her, and I home to my dear mother, who was almost too much surprised to speak to me when I appeared unannounced. Why had I come home so suddenly? Why had I not answered her two last letters? To these questions I replied by making a clean breast of the whole story, and, though my mother was at first terribly alarmed as to what Janet was like, and in her heart blamed the dear girl very much, yet she would say nothing hastily.

“Mother, you must see her before you blame me. You will find her a lady in every sense of the word, and the only person I ever met in all the world worthy to be your daughter. Besides, did you not tell me to look out for a ‘Cook’ in my travels?”

My mother being quite the best woman in existence, at once wrote to invite Janet to come and stay with her; and then —— but that is hardly necessary to write down. Yet she did say one day :

“Indeed, Reggie, I am quite satisfied with your choice. You could not have obeyed me more suitably.”

So Janet and I were married even before I was twenty-five years old, for Mr. Smith had left his niece a nice little income. And if a beautiful, loving and perfect wife can make a man an exemplary creature, then I feel sure I must come under that title. At all events, I know that I have never regretted having fallen in with one of “Cook’s Personally Conducted Tours.”



RED AND BLUE.

"So cold!" he said:

"I leave the Blue, though fair and soft the hue,
And choose the Red."

And she replies:

"I leave the Red, which stains the warrior's bed,
For tint of summer skies.

Blue are the distant hills—the land of dreams;
Blue in their limpid flow the quiet streams;

And blue the cornflow'r's eyes.

Blue speaks of joy serene, and thoughtful rest;
Hints at a peace profound in regions blest—
Of love, more tender than a mother's breast,
Which never dies.

Red glows, and flares, and burns itself away;
Leaves only embers of an ashy grey;
Pales with the sunset; fades with fading day—
A mocking bird that flies."

He answered: "Yet
The Red for me!

Deep crimson splendour; type of jubilee;
Of warm, successful love; of liberty:
Colour of blood and fire; of mountain peak
Flushed by the glory of the rising sun;
Showing in loveliest tint on maiden cheek
Dyed with the blush of its own modesty.

The violet

In presence of the rose—that peerless one,
Confesses, with bowed head, her charms outshone.
Red, darling of the Tropics, loves the light;
Blue hides in shade; her home in gloom and night."

A third voice broke in here:—

"The world is wide,

And Red and Blue may well live side by side,
A gallant bridegroom and a gentle bride.

Nor need they fear

Harm from such contact, each by each more fair;
Each giving that the other cannot yield;
Owning a power the other may not wield—

A fitting pair;

Complete, when wedded by the golden bond
That blends all difference in a single ray
Of light more pure than purest diamond
Rivals no longer; twain in one for aye."

EMMA RHODES.



THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1881.

COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNPLEASANT RUMOUR.

ONCE more a year has gone its round, bringing again to London all the stir and bustle of another season. It is a lovely afternoon in May, and there is some slight commotion in Chenevix House. Only the commotion of an unexpected arrival. Lady Mary Cleveland, with her infant child and its nurse, had come up from Netherleigh on a short visit. The infant, barely four weeks old yet, was a very small and fretful young gentleman, who had chosen to make his appearance in the world two good months before the world expected him.

Nobody was at home but Lady Grace. She ran down the stairs to welcome her sister.

"My dear Mary! I am so glad to see you! We did not expect you until Monday. You are doubly welcome."

"I thought it would make no difference—my coming a few days earlier, and without warning you," said Lady Mary, as she kissed her elder sister. "I am not very strong, Grace, and Mr. Forth has been anxious that I should have a change. This morning was so warm and fine, and I felt so languid, that he said to me, 'Why not start to-day?' So he and my husband packed me off, whether I would or no. Where's mamma?"

"Mamma and Harriet are out somewhere. Gone to see the pictures, I think," added Grace, as Lady Mary turned, of her own accord, into a small, cosy sitting-room that used to belong to the girls, and which they had nicknamed the "Hut."

Lady Mary looked surprised. "Harriet! Are the MacIvors here?"

"Oh dear, yes; staying with us. They came up from Scotland on Monday."

"I am rather sorry I came, then. It may be an inconvenience. And there won't be a bit of quiet in the house."

"It will be no inconvenience at all, Mary—what are you thinking of? You are to have your old room, and the baby the room next it. As to the house, it shall be as quiet as you please. I assure you it is wonderfully changed, in that respect, since all you girls were at home together."

"That time seems ages ago," remarked Lady Mary. "What light-headed, frivolous girls we were—and how life's cares change us! Fancy our all marrying and leaving you behind!"

"There's Frances, also."

"I forgot Frances. She is at Sarah's, I suppose, as usual. She will be marrying next, no doubt. I always thought she would be one of the first to marry, though she is the youngest except Adela. And then it will be your turn, Grace."

Grace slightly shook her head. "It will never be mine, Mary—as I believe. I have settled down into an old maid—and I feel like one. I would rather not marry now; at least, I think so. The time has gone by for it."

"What nonsense you talk! Why, you are only about three or four and thirty, Grace, though you are the eldest. A woman is not too old to marry, at that age."

"Well, I am not anxious to marry," replied Grace. "Papa and mamma should have one of us with them in their old age; and Frances will no doubt marry. It will, I know, be all as God pleases. Morning by morning as I get up, I put myself into His good care, and beseech Him to undertake for me—to use me as He will."

Lady Mary Cleveland smiled. This was all very right, of course—Grace had always had a religious corner in her heart.

"And now tell me all the news of Netherleigh," began Grace, when her sister had taken some refreshment, and the small mite of a baby was asleep, and they were back again in the "Hut," Mary lying on the sofa. "How is Aunt Margery?"

"You have had this room refurnished!" cried Mary, looking about her—at the bright carpet and chintz curtains.

"Yes, this spring. It was so very shabby."

"It is very pretty now. Aunt Margery?—oh, she is fairly well. Not too strong, I fancy. I went to the Court yesterday and had lunch with her. She is my baby's godmother."

"Is she? The baby's christened, then?"

"As if we should bring him away from home if he were not! You will laugh at his old-fashioned name, Grace—Thomas."

"Thomas is a very good name. It is your husband's."

"Yes—and not one of his first wife's children bear it. So I thought it high time this one should."

"Why did your husband not bring you up to-day?"

"Because he has two funerals this afternoon—people are sure to

die at the wrong time," added Lady Mary, quaintly. "And the vicar of the next parish, who is always ready to help him, is away this week."

"And the godfathers?—who are they, Mary?"

"My husband is one of them; he has stood to all his children. The other is Oscar Dalrymple."

"Oscar Dalrymple?" echoed Grace.

"Yes. He is not a general favourite, but Mr. Cleveland likes him. And he thinks he has behaved very well in this wretched business of Selina's. The one we should have preferred to have for godfather, we did not like to ask—if you can understand that apparent contradiction, Gracie."

"And who was that?" asked Grace, looking up.

"Mr. Grubb. He has been so very, very kind to us, and we like and respect him so greatly, above all other men on the face of the earth, that we quite longed to ask him to stand to the poor little waif. On the other hand, he is so wealthy and so generous that my husband thought it might look like coveting more benefits. And so we fixed on Mr. Dalrymple."

Grace mused.

"I never use my beautiful pony-carriage but I feel grateful to Mr. Grubb," went on Lady Mary. "And look how good he has been in regard to Charles!"

A slight frown at the last word contracted Grace's fair and open brow, as though the name wrought her some kind of discomfort. It was smoothed away at once.

"Are the Dalrymples still at Moat Grange?" she asked.

"Still there; living like hermits, in the most inexpensive manner possible, with two servants only—or three, I forget which. Two maids, I think it is; and a man, who has to do the garden—as much as one man can do of it—and feed the two pigs, and milk the cow, and see to the cocks and hens."

A smile crossed Grace's lips. "Does Selina like that kind of life?"

"Selina *has* to like it; at any rate, to put up with it, and she does it with a good grace. It is she who has reduced Oscar to poverty: the least she can do is to share in his retirement and retrenchments without murmuring. Oscar is trying to let Moat Grange, but does not seem able to succeed. His own little place, Knutford, was let for seven years when he came in to Moat Grange, so they cannot retire to that."

"It was very sad of Selina to act so," sighed Grace.

"It was unpardonable," corrected Lady Mary. "She knew how limited her husband's income was. Thoughtlessness runs in the Dalrymple family. Poor Mrs. Dalrymple wanted to give up the cottage and the income Oscar allows her, and go out into the world to shift for herself; but Oscar would not hear of it. We respect him for it. Close he may be, rather crabbed in temper; but he has a

keen sense of honour. Mr. Grubb's sister, Mary Lynn, comes sometimes to Netherleigh to spend a week with Mrs. Dalrymple—who was to have been Mary's mother-in-law, had things gone straight with Robert. What a sweet girl she is!"

"I have always thought Mary Lynn that, since I knew her."

"Do you see Alice Dalrymple often?" continued Lady Mary.

"Pretty often, save when the Hopes are in Gloucestershire. Alice looks very delicate."

"Is the Colonel reconciled to Gerard yet?"

"No; and not likely to be. Poor Gerard is somewhere abroad."

"And my husband's boy, Charley—do you see much of him, Grace?"

"Oh, we see him now and then," replied Grace in a tone of constraint.

"Adela has quite taken him up, we find. It is a relief to us, for we feared she might not; might even, we thought, resent having him in the house. How kind Mr. Grubb was over that; how considerably thoughtful!" continued Lady Mary. "None can know how truly good he is!"

"You are right there," acquiesced Grace. "But he does not always find his reward."

"How does Adela behave to him now?" questioned Lady Mary. She had applied the last remark to her sister Adela, and dropped her voice as she asked it.

"Just as usual. There's no improvement in her."

The previous summer, when the marriage of Lady Mary Chenevix took place with Mr. Cleveland, he, the Rector, came up the day before it, and stayed at Mr. Grubb's by invitation, to be in readiness for the morrow's ceremony. Mr. Grubb liked the Rector; he had felt deeply sorry for him when he was left a widower with so many children, and was glad he was going to have a new helpmate and they a second mother. That night, as they sat talking together after dinner—Adela being at her mother's, deep in all the wedding paraphernalia—the Rector opened his heart and his sorrows to Mr. Grubb: what a care his children were to him, and what he should do to place his many sons out in life. Charles, the second, was chiefly on his mind now. The eldest son, Harry, was in the army, and getting on well, expected to get his company soon. Charles, who was then twenty years of age, had been intended for the Church, but he had never taken to the idea kindly, and was now evincing a most unconquerable dislike to it. "I cannot force him into it," said the Rector sadly, "I must find some other opening for him. He must go out and begin to earn a living somehow—I have too many of them at home. I—suppose"—he added, in a hesitating tone of deprecation—"you could not make room for him in Leadenhall Street?" But Mr. Grubb told the Rector that he would gladly make room for him; and, amid the grateful thanks of the Rector, it was decided upon, there and then, Mr. Grubb being most liberal in his arrangements. "I must

find him a lodging," said the Rector; "perhaps some family would take him and board him." "No, no; he had better come here," said Mr. Grubb; "provided Adela makes no objection. Strange lodgings are the ruin of many a young fellow—and will be of many more. London lodgings are no true home for young men; they take to go abroad at night out of sheer loneliness, get exposed to the temptations of this most dangerous city, teeming with its specious allurements, and fall helplessly into its evil ways. Your son, Mr. Cleveland, shall come here and be sheltered from the danger, if my wife will have him."

Lady Adela apathetically consented, when the proposal was made to her: the lad might come if he liked, she did not care, was all she answered. And so Charles Cleveland came: and his father believed and declared that no man had ever been so good and generous as Mr. Grubb.

A tall, slender, gentlemanly, dark-eyed, and very handsome and somewhat idle young fellow Mr. Charles Cleveland turned out to be. He took well enough to his duties in the counting-house, far better than he had taken to Latin and Greek and theology: and Mr. Grubb was as kind to him as could be; and the more active partner, Mr. Howard, not too severe.

But at the close of winter, when Charles Cleveland had been some months located in Grosvenor Square, Lady Adela began to show herself very foolish. She struck up a flirtation with him. Whether it was done out of sheer ennui at the prolonged cold weather, or in very thoughtlessness, or by way of inventing another source of vexation for her husband, Adela set up a strong flirtation with Charles Cleveland, and the world was already talking of it and laughing at it. The matter, absurd though it was in itself, was vexing Grace Chenevix, and her sister's mention of Charley brought the vexation before her.

"We heard something about Adela last week," spoke Lady Mary, maintaining her low tone, "not at all creditable to her: but we hope it is not true."

Grace Chenevix felt her face flush. She assumed that her sister alluded to what was filling her thoughts, and she would have been glad to be spared speaking of it.

"It is but nonsense, Mary. It comes of sheer idle thoughtlessness on Adela's part, nothing more. Rely upon that."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Grace. But—do you ever go there with her?"

"Go where with her?"

"To Lady Sanely's."

The two sisters gazed at one another. They were at cross purposes.

"To Lady Sanely's?" exclaimed Grace in surprise. "I don't go there with Adela; I don't go there at all. Mamma has scarcely any acquaintance with Lady Sanely."

"Then how can you speak so confidently?" returned Mary

Cleveland. "Adela may be quite deep in the mischief, for all you know."

"Mary, I do not understand you. You must explain what you mean."

"It is said," whispered Mary, glancing round at the walls, as if to reassure herself no one else was present, "that Adela has taken to gambling. That ——"

"To gambling?" gasped Grace.

Lady Mary nodded. "It is said that gambling to a very dangerous extent is carried on at Lady Sanely's; and that Adela has been drawn into the snare, and goes there nightly, and plays deeply. How do you think we heard this?"

"Heaven knows," cried poor Grace, feeling a conviction that it might be true.

"From Harry; my husband's eldest son. He has got his promotion at last, as perhaps you know, and is daily expecting orders to embark for India. He ran down last week to see us, and it was he who mentioned it. My husband told him to be careful; that it could not be true. Harry maintained that it was true, and was, moreover, quite well known. He said he thought Lord Acorn was aware of it—but that Mr. Grubb was not."

"Papa *cannot* be aware of it," disputed Grace.

"Don't make too sure of it, Grace. Papa does a little in that line himself, you know; he may not look upon it in the dreadful light that you do, or that we people do in a rustic parsonage. Anyway, Harry says there's no mistake about Adela."

"Mr. Grubb ought to be warned—that he may save her."

"It is what my husband says—that Mr. Grubb ought to be told. I hope Adela has enough petty sins on her conscience!"

"This is the worst of all. She may ruin her husband, rich though he is."

"As poor Robert Dalrymple ruined himself. Scarcely that, however, in this case, Gracie. Mr. Grubb cannot be brought to ruin blindfold by his wife: and, it strikes me, he will take very good care, for her sake as well as his own, that she does not bring him to it. But he ought to be told without delay."

Grace Chenevix fell into one of the most unpleasant reveries she had ever experienced. Adela went often to Lady Sanely's; she knew that. Another moment, and Lord Acorn came in.

"Papa," cried Lady Mary, after she had greeted her father, "we were talking of Adela. A rumour reached us at Netherleigh that she was growing too fond of card-playing. It is carried on to a high extent at Lady Sanely's house, as we are led to believe, and that Adela is often there, and joining in it."

"Ay, they go in for tolerably high stakes at Lady Sanely's," replied the Earl, in his careless, not to say supercilious manner. "Very silly of Adela!"

"It is true then, papa!" gasped Grace.

"True enough," he remarked. "I daresay, though, Adela can take care of her purse-strings, and draw them in when necessary."

"How indifferent papa is!" thought Grace, with a sigh.

She was anything but indifferent. She was thinking what it might be best to do; how save Adela from further folly. After dinner, when the carriage came round to take her mother and Harriet to a small early gathering at old Lady Cust's, and Mary, tired with her day's journey, had retired for the night, Grace suddenly spoke.

"Mamma, I think, if you have no objection, I will go with you in the carriage and let it leave me at Adela's. I should like to sit an hour with her."

"I have no objection," was the answer of Lady Acorn, spoken rather tartly, as usual; for she lived in a chronic state of dissatisfaction with her daughter Adela. "Go, if you like. And just give her a hint to mend her manners, Grace, with regard to that boy."

"*That* is pure idle pastime," was the mental comment of Grace Chenevix. "This other may be worse."

CHAPTER XVII.

FLIRTATION.

THEY stood together in the dusk of the evening, the tempter and the deceived. Really it is not too much so to designate them. She, one of the fairest of earth's fair daughters, leaned in a listless attitude against the window-frame, looking out on the square. Perhaps, listening: for a woman of misery, with three children round her, was singing her doleful ditty there, and gazing up at the noble mansion as if she hoped some poor mite might be dropped to her from its superfluity of wealth. The children were thin and haggard, with that sharp, pinching look of *age* in their faces so unsuited to childhood, and which never comes but from famine and long-continued wretchedness. The mother—she was little more than a girl—made a halt opposite the window: her eye had caught the beautiful face enshrined there amidst the curtains, and she sang out louder and more piteously than ever.

"Now I think that's real—no imposture—none of those made-up cases that the Mendicity Society look up and expose."

The remark came from a young man, who was likewise looking out, a very good-looking young fellow of prepossessing countenance. There was an air of tenderness in his manner as he spoke, implying tenderness of heart for her who stood by him. And the Lady Adela roused herself, and carelessly asked, "What's real?" For her mind and thoughts had been dwelling on invisible and absent things, and the poverty and the singing had remained to her as though it had not been.

"That poor wretch there, and those famished children. That one

—the boy—looks as if he had not tasted food for a week. See how he fixes his eyes up here! I am sure they are famished.”

“Oh, Charles, don’t talk so! Street beggars ought not to be allowed to bring the sight of their misery here. It makes one shiver. They should confine themselves to the City, and such like low parts.”

“What’s that about the City,” inquired Mr. Grubb, who had entered and caught the last words; while the young man, Charley Cleveland, moving listlessly towards a distant window, stealthily threw a shilling from it, and then quitted the room.

“Street beggars,” answered Adela. “I say they ought not to be allowed out of the City, exposing their rags and their wretchedness to us! It is too bad.”

“The City is much obliged to you,” said her husband, in a marked manner, as if implying that he belonged to it. And the Lady Adela shrugged her shoulders in very French fashion, the gesture betraying contempt for the speaker and his words.

“Adela,” he said, quietly drawing her to a sofa and sitting down beside her, “I have long wanted a few minutes’ serious talk with you; and I have put it off from day to day, for the subject is full of pain to me, as it ought to be to you. Of shame, I had almost said.”

She turned her lovely eyes upon him. He could see the hard and defiant expression they took, even in the twilight gloom.

“You may spare yourself the trouble of a lecture—if that is what you intend. It will do me no good.”

“Whether it will do you good or not, you must hear it. Your behaviour ——”

She interrupted him, humming a merry tune.

“Adela, listen to me,” he resumed; and perhaps it was the first time she had heard from him so peremptory a tone. “Your behaviour is not what it ought to be; it is not wise or seemly; and you must alter it.”

“So you have told me ever since we were married, all the four years and the odd months,” she said, with a half-playful, half-mocking laugh.

“Of your behaviour to *me* I have told you so repeatedly and uselessly that I have now dropped the subject for ever. What I would now speak of is your behaviour to young Cleveland. The world is beginning to notice it; and, Adela, what is objectionable in it *shall* be discontinued.”

“There is nothing objectionable—except in your imagination.”

“There is: and you know it, Adela. You may treat me as you like; I cannot, unfortunately, alter that; but I will guard *you* from being talked of. As to Cleveland ——”

“Charley,” she broke in, turning her head to look for him; “Charley, do you hear my husband? He would like to —— I thought Charley was here.”

"Had he been here I should not have spoken," was Mr. Grubb's reply, the signs of mortification stirring his refined and sensitive lips.

"Is your rôle going to be that of a jealous husband at last?"

"No," he replied. "You have striven, with unnecessary endeavour, to deaden the love for you which once filled my heart; if that love has not turned to gall and bitterness, it is not your fault. This is not a case for jealousy, Adela. You must know that. I jealous of a schoolboy!"

"What is it a case of, then?"

"Your fair reputation. That shall be cared for in the eyes of the world."

"There is no necessity for your caring for it," she retorted. "My reputation—and your honour—are perfectly safe in my own keeping. There lives not a man who could bring disgrace upon me. You are out of your senses, Mr. Grubb."

"That my honour is safe I do not doubt," he returned, drawing himself slightly up. "Forgive me if my words could have borne any other construction. I speak only of your reputation for folly—frivolity. The world is laughing at you: and I do not choose that it shall laugh."

A shade of annoyance flashed into her pretty face. "The world is nothing to me. It had better laugh at itself."

"Perfectly true. But I must take care it does not laugh at you. Your mother spoke to me to-day about Charles Cleveland. She called you a child, Adela; and she said if I did not interfere and put a stop to it, she should."

"Let my mother mind her own affairs," was Adela's answer, full of resentment. "She can dictate to the two who are left to her, but not to the rest of us. When we married, we passed out of her control."

"Surely not. Your mother is always your mother."

"Pray where did you see her? Has it come to secret meetings, in which my conduct is discussed?"

"Nonsense, Adela! Lady Acorn came to see me in Leadenhall Street, upon other matters."

"And so you got up a nice little mare's nest between you! That I was too fond of Charley Cleveland, and ought to be put in irons for it!"

"That you were too *free* with him, Adela," corrected her husband. "That your manners with him, chiefly in this your own house, were losing that reserve which ought to temper them, though he is but a boy. It was she who said the world was laughing at you."

"And what did you say?" asked Lady Adela, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I said nothing," he replied, a sort of sadness in his tone. "I *could* have said that the subject had for some little time been to me a source of annoyance; and I might have added that if I had refrained from remonstrance, it was because remonstrance from me to my wife had ever been worse than useless."

"That's true enough, sir. Then why attempt it now?"

"For your own sake. And in years to come, when time shall have brought to you sense and feeling, you will thank me for being more careful of your fair fame than you seem inclined to be yourself. I do not wish to pursue the subject, Adela; let the hint I have given you avail. Be more circumspect in your manners to young Cleveland. You know perfectly well that you are pursuing this senseless flirtation with him for one sole end—to vex me: you really care no more for him than for the wind that passes. But society, you see, not being behind the scenes, may be apt to attribute other motives to you. Change your tactics, *be true to yourself*; and then ——"

"And then? Well?"

"I shall not be called upon to interpose my authority. To do so would be against my inclination and Charles Cleveland's interests."

"*Your* authority!" she retorted in a blaze of scorn—for if there was one thing that put out Lady Adela more than another, it was to be lectured: and she certainly did not like to be told that the world was laughing at her. "Have I ever altered my manners for any authority you could bring to bear?—do you suppose that I shall alter them now? Go and preach to your people in the City, if you must preach somewhere."

"Lady Grace Chenevix," interrupted the groom of the chambers, throwing wide the door,

"You are all in the dark!" exclaimed Grace. "I took the chance of finding you at home, Adela. Mamma and Harriet are gone to the Dowager Cust's."

"I am glad you came, Grace," said Mr. Grubb, ringing for lights. "I wanted to look in at the club for half an hour: you will stay with Lady Adela."

"Grace," to his sister-in-law, "*Lady* Adela," to his wife: what did that tell? Any way, it told that he had been provoked almost beyond bearing.

"Mary came up this afternoon, taking us by surprise," began Grace, as Mr. Grubb left the room, and the man retired after lighting the wax-lights. "She does not seem strong; and the baby is such a poor little ——"

"Pray are you a party to this conspiracy between my mother and him?" unceremoniously interposed Adela, with a fling of her hand towards the door by which her husband had disappeared, to indicate whom she meant by "him;" and the words were the first she had condescended to speak to her sister since her entrance.

"Conspiracy? I don't know of any," answered Grace, wondering what was coming.

"Had you been a few moments earlier, you would have found him holding forth about Charley Cleveland. And he said my mother went to him in the City to-day to put him up to it."

"Oh, if you mean about Charley Cleveland, I was going to speak

to you of it myself. You are getting quite absurd about him, Adela. Or he is about you. It was said at Brookes's, the other day, that Charley Cleveland was losing his head for Lady Adela Grubb."

Lady Adela laughed. "Who said it, Gracie?"

"Oh, I don't know; a lot of them were together. Captain Foster, and Cust, and Lord Deerhum, and Booby Charteries, and others. It seems Charley was a little overcome the previous evening. He and his brother had been dining with the Guards, very freely, and afterwards they went to—I forget the place—somewhere that young men do go to of an evening, and Charley finished himself up with brandy and cigars; and then he managed to hiccup out, that the only angel living upon earth was Lady Adela Grubb."

"And that's all!" she said, lightly—"that Charley called me an angel! I told him it was a mare's-nest."

"No, it is not all," quickly answered Lady Grace. "It might be all, if it were not for your folly. I have seen Charley hold your hand in his; I have seen him kiss it; I have seen him bend forward and whisper to you until his hair has all but touched yours. It is very bad, Adela."

"It is very amusing; it serves to pass away the time," laughed Lady Adela. "And, pray, Grace, how came you to know so much of what they say and do at their clubs?"

"That's one of the annoying parts of it. Colonel Hope heard it; he was present. He went home, shocked and scared, to tell Sarah; and Sarah came yesterday morning and told mamma."

"Shocked and scared too? I should like to have seen Sarah's long face!"

"You should have seen mamma's. No wonder she went down to your husband. But that is not all yet, Adela. One of them, I think it was Lord Deerhum—whoever it was, had dined here a night or two before—told the others that you flirted with Charley desperately before your husband's eyes, and that while you showed favour to the one, you snubbed the other."

"And it's true," coolly avowed Adela. "I like Charley Cleveland, and I *choose* to flirt with him. But if you strait-coated people think I have any wrong liking for him, you err woefully. Grace, all this is but idle talk. I shall *never* compromise myself by so much as a hazardous word, for Charley, or for anyone else. I have just told *him* so."

"Pleasant! the necessity for such an assertion to one's lord and master!"

"I never loved anybody in my life; and I'm sure I am not going to begin now. Not even Captain Stanley—though I did have a passing liking for him. Perhaps you will be surprised to hear, Grace, that there were odd moments in my life during the first year or two after my marriage, when I was nearer loving Francis Grubb than I had been of loving anyone—only that I had set out by steeling my heart against him."

Grace gazed at her sister wonderingly.

"But that's all past: and of love I feel none for any mortal man, and don't mean to feel it. But I like amusement—and I am amusing myself with Charley Cleveland."

"You have no right to do it, Adela. What is but sport to you, as it seems, may be death to him."

"That is his look-out," laughed Adela. "My private belief is, if you care to know it, that my husband was thinking as much of Charley as of me when he took upon himself to lecture me just now. Of the consequences to Charley's vulnerable and boyish heart; though he did put it upon me and of what the world might say."

"How grievously you must try your husband!" exclaimed Grace.

"He's used to it."

"You provoking woman! You'll never go to heaven, I should say, if only for your treatment of him. Adela, you made your vows before Heaven to love and honour him: how do you fulfil them?"

"I heard the other day you had turned Methodist; Bessy Cust came in and said it. I am sorry I contradicted it," cried the provoking Adela.

"You cannot set the world at defiance."

"I don't mean to. As to Charley dancing attendance on me, or kissing my hand—what harm is there in it?"

"That may be according to one's own notion of 'harm.' Even the most trifling approach to flirting is entirely unseemly in a married woman."

"Are you quite a competent judge—not being married yourself?" rejoined Adela. "See here, Grace—if you never flirt worse with anyone than Charley flirts with me, you won't hurt."

"I am afraid he has learnt to *love* you, Adela."

"The more silly, he, for his pains. Why, I am oceans of years older than Charley is. He ought to think of me as his grandmother."

"*Can't* you be serious, child? I want you to see the thing in its proper—or, rather, improper—light. When it comes to a man, other than your husband, kissing you, it is time ——"

"Who said Charley kissed me?" retorted Adela, in a blaze of anger. "He has never done such a thing—never dared to attempt it. I said he kissed my hand sometimes—and then it has generally had a glove upon it."

"Well, well, whatever the nonsense may be, you must give it up, Adela. There can be no objection on your part to do so, as you say you do not care for Charles Cleveland."

"Incorrect, Lady Grace. I do care for him; I enjoy his friendship amazingly. What I said was, that I did not love him. That would be too absurd."

"Call it flirtation, don't call it friendship," wrathfully retorted Grace. "And he must be as devoid of brains as a calf, to attach

himself to you, if he has done it. I hope nothing of this will reach the ears of Mary or of his father. They would not believe him capable of such folly. From this hour, Adela, you must give it up."

"Just what Mr. Grubb has been good enough to tell me; but 'must' is a word I do not understand," lightly rejoined Adela. "Neither you nor he will make me break off my flirtation with Charles Cleveland. I shall go into it all the more to spite you."

"If I were Mr. Grubb I should beat you, Adela."

"If!" laughingly echoed Lady Adela. "If you were Mr. Grubb, you would do as he does. Why, Gracie, girl, he loves me passionately still, for all his assumed indifference. Do you think there are never moments when he betrays it? He is jealous of Charley; that's what he is, in spite of his dignified denial—and oh, the fun it is to me to have made him so!"

"Adela," said Grace sadly, "does it never occur to you that this behaviour may tire your husband out?—that his love and his patience may give way at last?"

"I wish they would!" cried the provoking girl, little seeing, or caring, in her reckless humour, what the wish might imply. "I wish he would go his way and let me go mine, and give me hundreds of thousands a year for my own share. He should have the dull rooms in the house and I the bright ones, and we would only meet at dinner on state occasions, when the world and his wife came to us."

Lady Grace felt downright angry. She wondered whether Adela spoke in her heart's true sincerity.

"There's no fear of it, Gracie: don't look at me like that. My husband would no more part company with me, whatsoever I might do, than he would part with his soul. He loves me too well."

"It is a positive disgrace to have one's married sister's name coupled with a flirtation," grumbled Grace: for the Lady Acorn, whatever might be her failings as to tongue and temper, had brought her daughters up in the purest and best of notions. "That reverend man, Dr. Short—I cannot think how it came to *his* ears—hinted at it to-day in talking with mamma when they met at the picture galleries. He ——"

"There it is!" shouted Adela, in glee; "the murder's out! So it is you who have been putting mamma up to complain to Mr. Grubb! You are setting your cap at that sanctimonious Dr. Short, and you fear he won't see it if you have got a naughty sister given to flirting. Oh, Gracie!"

"You are wrong; you know you are wrong. How frivolous you are, Adela! Dr. Short is going to be married to Miss Greatlands."

"Well, there's something of the sort in the wind, I know. If it's not the Reverend Dr. Short, it's the Reverend Dr. Long; so don't shake your head at me, Gracie."

Dancing across the room, Adela rang the bell. "My carriage, she said to the servant.

"It has been waiting some time, my lady."

"Where are you going?" asked Grace, surprised.

"To Lady Sanely's."

"To Lady Sanely's," echoed the elder sister. Then, after a pause, "Your husband did not know you were going there?"

"Do you suppose I tell him of my engagements? What next, I wonder?"

"Oh, Adela!" uttered Lady Grace, rising from her seat—and there was a piercing sound of grief in her tone, deeper than any which had characterised it throughout the interview—"do not say you are going *there*! Another rumour is rife about you; worse than that half-nonsensical one about Charles Cleveland; one likely to have a far graver effect on your welfare and happiness."

"I—I do not understand," repeated Adela; but her tone, in spite of its display of haughtiness, betrayed that she did understand, and it struck terror to the heart of her sister. "I think you are all beside yourselves to day!"

Grace, greatly agitated, clasped the other's arm as she was turning away. "It is said, Adela—I have heard it, and papa has confirmed it—it is rumoured that you have become addicted to a—a—dangerous vice. Oh, forgive me, Adela! Is it so? You shall not go until you have answered me."

The rich colour in Lady Adela's cheeks had faded to paleness; her eyes drooped; she could not look her sister in the face. From this, her manner of receiving the accusation, it might be seen how much more real was this trouble, than the half-nonsensical one, as Grace had called it, connected with Charles Cleveland.

"Vice!" she vaguely repeated.

"That of gaming," spoke Grace, her own voice unsteady in its deep emotion. "That you play deeply, night by night, at Lady Sanely's."

"What strong words you use!" gasped Adela, resentfully. "Vice! Just because I may take a hand at cards now and then!"

"Oh, my poor sister, my dear sister, you do not know what it may lead to!" pleaded Grace. "You shall not go forth to Lady Sanely's this night—do not! do not! Break through this dreadful chain at once—before it be too late."

Angry at hearing this amusement of hers had become known at home, vexed and embarrassed at being pressed, almost by force, to stay away from its fascinations, Adela flung her sister's arm from her and moved forward with an impatient gesture of passion. They were near a table, and her own hand, or that of Grace, neither well knew which, caught in a beautiful inkstand, and turned it over. The ink was scattered on the light carpet; an ugly, dark blotch.

What cared Adela? If the costly carpet was spoiled, *his* money might purchase another. She moved on to her dressing-room, caused her maid, waiting there, to envelop her in her evening mantle, and then swept down to her carriage.

That Lady Adela did not care for Charles Cleveland was perfectly true. She would have laughed at the very idea ; she regarded him but as a pleasant-mannered boy : nevertheless, partly to while away the time, which sometimes hung heavily on her hands, partly because she hoped it would vex her husband, whom she but lived to annoy, she had plunged into the flirtation.

It was something more on Charley's part. For, while Adela cared not for him, beyond the passing amusement of the moment, would not have given to him a regretful thought had he suddenly been removed from her sight for ever, he had grown to love her to idolatry. It is a strong expression, but in this case justifiable. Almost as the sun is to the world, bringing to it light and heat, life to flowers, perfection to the corn, so had Lady Adela become to him. In her presence he could alone be said to live ; his heart then was at rest, feeding on its own fulness of happiness, and there he could thankfully have lived and died, and never asked for change : when obliged to be absent from her, a miserable void was his, a feverish yearning for the hour that should bring him to her again. Surely this was most reprehensible on his part—to have become attached, in this senseless manner, to a married woman ! Reprehensible ? Hear what one says of another love ; he who knew so much about love himself—Lord Byron :

" Why did she love him ? Curious fool, be still :
Is human love the growth of human will ? "

Could the fault have lain with Lady Adela ? Most undoubtedly. She, not casting a thought to the effect it might have upon his heart, and secure in her own supreme indifference, purposely threw out the bait of her beauty and her manifold attractions, and so led him on to love—a love as true and impassioned as was ever felt by man. What did he promise himself by it ?—what did he think could come of it ? Nothing. Hewas not capable of cherishing towards her a dishonourable thought, he had never addressed to her a disloyal word. It was not in the nature of Charles Cleveland to do anything of the kind ; he was single-minded, single-hearted, chivalrously honourable. He thought of her as being all that was good and beautiful : to him she seemed to be without fault, sweet and pure as an angel. To conceal his deep love for her was beyond his power ; eye, tone, manner, tacitly and unconsciously betrayed it. And Lady Adela, to give her her due, did not encourage him to more.

And so, while poor Charley was living on in his fool's paradise, wishing for nothing, looking for nothing, beyond the exquisite sense of bliss her daily presence brought him, supremely content could he have lived on it for ever, Lady Adela already found the affair was growing rather monotonous. The chances were that had her husband and Grace not spoken to her, she would very speedily have thrown off Charley and his allegiance. Adela had no special pursuit whence to draw daily satisfaction. No home (the French would better express

it by the word *ménage*) to keep up and contrive for; the hand of wealth was at work, and all was provided for her to satiety; she had no children to train and love; she had no husband whom it was a delight to her to please and cherish: worse than all, she had (let us say *as yet*) no sense of responsibility to a higher Being, for time and talents wasted.

A woman cannot be truly happy (or a man either) unless she possesses some aim in life, some daily source of occupation, be it work, or be it pleasure, to contrive, and act, and live for. Without it she becomes a vapid, weary, discontented being, full of vague longings for she knows not what. One of two results is pretty sure to follow—mischief or misery. Lady Adela was too young and pretty to be miserable, therefore she turned to mischief.

Chance brought her an introduction to the Countess of Sanely, with whom the Chenevix family had no previous acquaintance, and who had a reputation for loving high card-playing and for encouraging it at her house: she and Adela grew intimate, and Adela was drawn into the disastrous pursuit. At first she liked it well enough; it was fascinating, it was new: and now, when perhaps she was beginning to be a little afraid, and would fain have retreated, she did not see her way clear to do so; for she owed money that she could not pay.

Lady Grace Chenevix, unceremoniously left alone in her sister's drawing-room, rang the bell. It was to tell them to attend to the ink. The carriage was not coming for her till eleven o'clock, and it was now but half-past ten. Hers were not very pleasant thoughts with which to get through the solitary half-hour. Mr. Grubb came in, and inquired for his wife. Grace said she had gone out.

"What, and left you alone! Where's she gone to?"

"To Lady Sanely's."

"Who are these Sanelys, Grace?" he inquired as he sat down. "Adela passes four or five nights a week there. The other evening I took up my hat to accompany her, and she would not have it. What kind of people are they?"

"Four or five nights a week," mechanically repeated Grace, passing over his question. "And at what time does she get home?"

"At all hours. Sometimes very late."

Grace sat communing with herself. Should she impart this matter of uneasiness to Mr. Grubb, or should she be silent, and let things take their chance? Which course would be more conducive to the interests of Adela? for she was indeed most anxious for her. She looked up at him, at his noble countenance, betraying commanding sense and intellect—surely to impart the truth to such a man was to make a confidant of one able to do for her sister all that could be done. Mr. Cleveland and Mary both said he ought to hear it without delay. And Grace's resolution was taken.

"Mr. Grubb," she said, her voice somewhat unsteady, "Adela is your wife and my sister; we have both, therefore, her true welfare at

heart. I have been deliberating whether I should speak to you upon a subject, which—which—gives me uneasiness, and I believe I ought to do so."

"Stay, Grace," he interrupted. "If it is—about—Cleveland, I would rather not enter upon it. Lady Acorn spoke to me to-day, and I have given a hint to Adela."

"Oh, no, it is not that. She goes on in a silly way with him, but there's no harm in it, only thoughtlessness. I am *sure* of it."

He nodded his head, in acquiescence, and began pacing the room.

"It is of her intimacy with Lady Sanely that I would speak ; these frequent visits there. Do you know what they say?"

"No," he replied, assuming great indifference, his thoughts apparently directed to placing his feet on one particular portion of the pattern of the carpet, and to nothing else.

"They say—they do say"—Grace faltered, hesitated : she hated to do this, and the question flashed across her, could she avoid it?

"Say what?" said Mr. Grubb carelessly.

"That play to an incredible extent is carried on there. And that Adela has been induced to join in it."

His assumed indifference was forgotten now, and the carpet might have been patternless for all he knew of it. He had stopped right under the chandelier, its flood of light illumining his countenance as he looked long and hard at Grace, as one in a maze.

Much that had been inexplicable in his wife's conduct for some little time past was rendered clear now. Her feverish restlessness on the evenings she was going to Lady Sanely's ; her coming home at all hours jaded, sick, out of spirits, yet unable to sleep ; her extraordinary demands for money, latterly to an extent which had puzzled and almost terrified him. But he had never yet refused it to her.

"It must be put a stop to somehow," said Grace.

"It must," he answered, resuming his walk, and drawing a deep breath. "What's all this wet on the carpet?"

"An accident this evening. Some ink was thrown down. My fault, I believe. At any cost, any sacrifice," continued Lady Grace. "If the habit should get hold of Adela, there is nothing but unhappiness before her—perhaps ruin."

"Any cost, any sacrifice, that I can make, shall be made," repeated Mr. Grubb. "But Adela will listen to no remonstrance from me. You know that, Grace."

"You must—stop the supplies," suggested Grace, dropping her voice to a confidential whisper. "Has she had much of late?"

"Yes."

"More than her allowance ? Perhaps not, as that is so liberal."

"Her allowance !" half laughed her husband, not a happy laugh. "It has been, to what she has drawn of me, as a silver coin in a purse of gold."

Grace clasped her hands. "And you let her have it! Did you suspect nothing?"

"Not of this nature. I suspected that she might be buying costly things—after the reckless fashion of Selina Dalrymple. Or else that—forgive me, Grace, I would rather not say more."

"Nay," said Grace, rising to put her hand on his arm and meeting his earnest glance, "let there be entire confidence between us; keep nothing back."

"Well, Grace, I fancied she might be lending it to your mother."

"No, no; my mother has not borrowed from her lately. Oh, how can we save her! This is an insinuating vice that gains upon its votaries, they say, like the eating of opium."

"Your carriage, my lady," interrupted a servant, entering the room. And Grace caught up her mantle.

"Must you go, Grace? It is scarcely eleven."

"Yes. If mamma does not have the carriage to the minute, she won't cease scolding for days, and it must take me home first. Dear Mr. Grubb, turn this over in your mind," she whispered, "and see what you can do. Use your influence with her, and be firm."

"My influence, did you say?" And there was a touch of sarcasm in his tone, mingled with a grief painful to hear. "What has my influence with her ever been, Grace?"

"I know, I know," she cried, wringing his hand, and turning from him towards the stairs, that he might not see the tears gathering in her eyes. Tears of sympathy with his wrongs, and partly, perhaps, of regret: for she was thinking of that curious misapprehension, years ago, when she had been led to believe that it was herself who was his chosen bride. "I would not have treated him so," her heart murmured; "I would have made his life a happy one, as he deserves it should be."

He gained upon her fast steps; and, drawing her arm within his, led her down-stairs, and placed her in the carriage.

"Dear Mr. Grubb," she whispered, as he clasped her hands, "do not let what I have been obliged to say render you harsh with poor Adela. Different days may be in store for you both; she may yet be the mother of your children, when happiness in each other would surely follow. Do not be unkind to her."

"Unkind to Adela! No, Grace. Separation, rather than unkindness."

"Separation!" gasped Grace, the ominous word affrighting her.

"I have thought sometimes that it may come to it. A man cannot patiently endure contumely for ever, Grace."

He withdrew his hand from hers, and turned back into his desolate home. Grace sank back in the carriage.

"God keep him! God comfort him, and help him to bear!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PRESENT OF COFFEE.

It was two o'clock when Lady Adela returned home. She ran lightly upstairs and into the drawing-room, throwing off her mantle as she came in. A tray of refreshments stood on a side-table.

Mr. Grubb rose from his chair. "It is very late, Adela."

"Late! Not at all. I wish to *goodness* you'd not sit up for me!

She went up to the table and stood looking at the decanters, as if deliberating what she should take, murmuring something about being "frightfully thirsty."

"What shall I give you?" he asked.

"Nothing," was the ungracious answer, most ungraciously spoken. And she poured out a tumbler of weak sherry-and-water, and drank it; a second, and drank that also. Then, without taking any notice of him, she went up to her chamber. Anything more pointedly, stingingly contemptuous than her behaviour to her husband, now, and for some time past, has never been exhibited by mortal woman.

Mr. Grubb rang for the man to put out the wax-lights, and went up in his turn. There was no sleep for him that night, whatever there might have been for her. He knew not how to act, how to arrest this new pursuit of hers; he scarcely knew even how to open the matter to her. She appeared to be asleep when he rose in the morning and passed into his dressing-room. She, herself, soon afforded him the opportunity.

He was seated at his solitary breakfast, a meal his wife rarely condescended to take with him, when her maid entered, bringing a message from her lady—that she wished to see him before he left for the City. Master Charley Cleveland, usually his breakfast companion, had not made his appearance at home since the previous night.

"Is your lady up, Davvy?"

"Oh dear yes, sir, and at breakfast in her dressing-room."

He went up to it. How very lovely she looked, sitting there at her coffee, in her embroidered white dress and its pink ribbons, and the delicate lace cap shading her sweet features. She had risen thus early to get money from him; he knew that, before she asked for it.

"You wished to see me, Lady Adela."

"I want some money," she said, in a light, flippant kind of tone, as if it were the sole purpose of Mr. Grubb's existence to supply her demands for it.

"Impossible," he rejoined. "You had two hundred pounds from me the day before yesterday."

"I must have two hundred more this morning. I want it."

"What is it that you are doing with all this money? It has much puzzled me."

"Oh—making a purse for myself," she answered, saucily.

"You can trust me to do that for you. I cannot continue to supply you, Adela."

"But I must have it," she retorted, raising her voice and speaking as though he were the very dirt under her feet. "I will have it."

"No," he replied calmly, but with firm resolution in his tone. "I shall give you no more until your allowance is due."

She looked up, quite a furious expression on her lovely face. "Not give it me! Why, what do you suppose I married you for?"

"Adela!" came his reproof, almost whispered.

"I would not have taken you but for your money; you know that. They promised me at home that I should have unlimited command of it; and I will."

"You have had unlimited command," he observed, and there was no irritation suffered to appear in his tone, whatever may have been his inward pain. "It is for your own sake I must discontinue to supply it."

"You are intelligible!" was her scornful rejoinder: for, in good truth, this refusal was making havoc of her temper.

"All that you can need in every way shall be yours, Adela. Purchase what you like, order what you like; I will pay the bills without a murmur. *But I will not give you money to waste, as you have latterly wasted it, at Lady Sanely's.*"

She rose from her seat, pale with anger. "First Charles Cleveland, then Lady Sanely: what else am I to be lectured upon? How dare you presume to interfere with my pursuits?"

"I should ill be fulfilling my duty to you, or my love either, Adela, what is left of it, if I did not interfere."

"I will not listen, Mr. Grubb: if you attempt to preach to me, as you did last night, I will run away. Sit down and write me a cheque for the money."

"There is no necessity for me to repeat my refusal, Adela. Until I have reason to believe that this new liking for PLAY has left you, you should draw my blood from me, sooner than money to pursue it. But remember," he impressively added, "that I say this in all kindness."

She looked at him, her delicate throat working, her breath growing short with passion.

"Will you give me the cheque?"

"I will not. Anything more, Adela, for I am late?"

There was no answer in words, but she suddenly raised the cup, which chanced to be in her hand, and was half full of coffee, and flung it at him. It struck him on the chin, the coffee falling upon his clothes.

It was a moment of embarrassment for them both. He looked steadfastly at her, with a calm, despairing sorrow, and then quitted the room. While Lady Adela, her senses returning, sank back in her chair; and, in the reaction of her inexcusable passion, sobbed aloud.

It was quite a violent fit of sobbing: and she smothered her head

up, that he should not hear. She did feel ashamed of herself, felt even a little honest shame at her general treatment of him. As her sobs subsided, she heard him in his dressing-room, changing his things, and she wished she had not done it. But she *must* have the money; that, and more; without it, she should be in a frightful dilemma, and might have her name posted up as a card-playing defaulter in the drawing-rooms of society. So she determined to have another battle for it with her husband, and she dried the tears on her fair young face, and opened his dressing-room door quite humbly, so to say, and went into it.

It was empty. Mr. Grubb's movements had been rapid, and he was already gone. He had put out of sight the stained things taken off, removed all traces of them. Was she not sensible even of this? Did she not know that he was thus cautious for her own sake—that no scandal might be given to the tongues of the servants? Not she. With his disappearance, and the consequent failure of her hope, all her resentment was returning. Her foot kicked against something on the floor, and she stooped to pick it up. It was her husband's cheque-book, which he must have unconsciously dropped when transferring things from one pocket to another.

Was a demon just then at Lady Adela's side?—what else could have impelled her?—what else whispered to her of a way to supply the money she wanted? Once only a momentary hesitation crossed her; but she drove it away, and carried the cheques to her writing table, and *used one of them*.

She drew it for five hundred pounds, a heavy sum, and she boldly signed it "Grubb and Howard." For it happened to be the cheque-book of the firm, not of her husband's private account. She was clever at drawing, clever at imitating styles of writing—not that she had ever turned her talent to its present use, or thought so to turn it—and the signature, when finished, looked very like her husband's own. Then she carried back the cheque-book, and laid it on the floor where she found it.

Some time after all this was accomplished, she was passing downstairs, deliberating upon whether she could dare to go to the bank herself to get the cheque cashed, when Charles Cleveland came in, and bounded up the stairs.

"Where did Mr. Grubb breakfast this morning?" he enquired, apparently in a desperate hurry, as they shook hands, and turned into one of the sitting-rooms, Charley devouring her with his eyes all the time. Little blame to him, either, for she was looking most lovely: the excitement, arising from what she had done, glowing in her cheeks like a sweet blush-rose.

"What a question! He breakfasted at home."

"Yes, yes, dear Lady Adela. I meant in which room." For Mr. Grubb sometimes breakfasted in the regular breakfast-room, and sometimes in his library.

"I really don't know, and don't care," returned Adela, connecting the question somehow, in her own mind, with the present of coffee he had received. "His breakfasting is a matter of indifference to me. And pray, Mr. Charley, where did *you* breakfast this morning?—and what became of you last night? Have you been making a night of it with the owls and the bats?"

"I went to my brother's. Harry had some fellows with him, and we, as you express it, dear Lady Adela, made a night of it. That is, we broke up so late that I would not disturb your house by returning here; Harry gave me a sofa, and I went direct from him to Leadenhall Street this morning."

"And what have you come back for?"

"For Mr. Grubb's cheque-book. He has missed it, and thinks he must have left it on the breakfast-table."

"Charley," she said, "I was just wanting you. *Will* you do me a favour?"

"I will do everything you wish," he answered, his tones literally trembling with tenderness.

"I want you to go to the bank in Lombard Street, and get me a cheque cashed. Mr. Grubb gave it me this morning, and I am in a hurry for the money, for I expect people here every minute with some accounts. It is not crossed. Take a cab and go at once."

"I will. I can leave the cheque-book in Leadenhall Street first."

"No, you must not wait to find the cheque-book. I will look for it while you are gone. You will not be many minutes, I am sure, and I tell you I am all impatience."

Charley Cleveland hesitated. "I scarcely know what to say," he replied, dubiously, to this. "Mr. Grubb is waiting for the cheque-book. This is Saturday, you know."

"What if it is?"

"We are always so busy on Saturdays."

"Very well, Charles," she returned, in a hurt, resentful tone. "If you like Mr. Grubb better than you do me, you will oblige him first. You would be there and back in no time."

"Dearest Lady Adela! Like Mr. Grubb better than—— Well, I will do it, though I daresay I shall get into a row. Have the cheque-book ready, that I may not lose a moment when I get back." And Adela nodded assent.

"A confounded row, too," he muttered to himself, as he tore down the stairs, and into the cab; "but I will go through a thunder-cloud full of rows, for *her*." Charley gave a concise word to the driver, and away dashed the cab towards Lombard Street, at a pace which terrified the road generally, and greatly astonished the apple-stalls.

He was back in an incredibly short space of time, and paid the notes over to her. "Have you found the cheque-book?" he asked.

"I declare I never thought about it," was Lady Adela's reply.

"But he breakfasted in the library, I hear. Perhaps you will find it there."

He rushed down to the library. And there, on the table, was the missing cheque-book. Oh, wary Lady Adela!

She followed him into the room. "Charley," she whispered, "don't say you have been out for me—no need to say you have seen me. The fact is, that staid husband of mine got a grumbling fit upon him last night, and accused me of talking and laughing too much with the world in general and Mr. Charles Cleveland in particular. If they find fault with you for loitering, say you were detained on some matter of your own."

He nodded in the affirmative. But a red vermilion was stealing over his face, dyeing it to the very roots of his hair, and his heart's pulses were rising high. For surely in that last speech she meant to imply that she *loved* him. And Master Charles felt his brain turn round as it had never turned before, and he bent that flushed face down upon her hand, and left on it an impassioned, though very respectful kiss, by way of adieu.

"What a young goose he is!" thought Adela.

Very ill at ease, that day, was the Lady Adela. Reckless though she might be as to her husband's good opinion, implicitly secure though she felt that he would hush up the matter and shield her from consequences, she could not help being dissatisfied with what she had done. Suppose *exposure* came?—she would not like *that*. She had written Mr. Howard's name, as well as her husband's! She lost herself in a reverie, her mind running from one ugly point to another. Try as she would, she could not drive the thoughts away, and by the afternoon she had become seriously uneasy. Was such a case ever known as that of a wife being brought to trial for—"Whatever possesses me to dwell upon such things?" she mentally queried, starting up in anger with herself. "Rather order the carriage and go and pay my last night's losses."

From Lady Sanely's she went to her mother's, intending to stay and dine there. Somehow she was already beginning to shrink from meeting her husband's face. However, she found they were all engaged to dine at Colonel Hope's, including her sister Mary. So Adela had to return home: but she took care not to do it until close upon the dinner hour.

Mr. Grubb and Charles Cleveland were both at table. Neither of them alluded to the unpleasant topic uppermost in her mind, so she concluded that as yet nothing had come out. Mr. Grubb was very silent—the result no doubt of the coffee in the morning.

"I am going down to Netherleigh to-morrow morning, sir, to see my father," observed Charles. "He has written to ask me. Could you allow me to remain for Monday also? Harry means to run down for an hour that day, to say good-bye."

"Monday?" considered Mr. Grubb. "Yes, I suppose you can,

There's nothing particular that you will be required for on Monday, that I know of. You may stay."

"Thank you, sir."

"When does your brother leave?"

"I think on Tuesday morning."

Accordingly, on the following morning, Sunday, Charley left the house to go to Netherleigh. Mr. Grubb went to church, as usual; Adela made an excuse—said her head ached. When he returned home at one o'clock, he found she had gone to her mother's; and, without saying to him with your leave, or by your leave, without, in fact, giving him any intimation whatever, she remained at Chenevix House for the rest of the day.

On the Monday, Mr. Grubb went to business at the customary hour, but returned early in the afternoon to attend some public meeting in Westminster, connected with politics. Influential people—Conservatives: who were called Tories then—had for some time past been soliciting him to go into Parliament; he had not quite made up his mind yet whether he would, or not.

He and his wife dined alone. Lord and Lady Kingdon, with whom they were intimate, were to have dined with them; but only a few minutes before the time of sitting down, a note came to say they had received ill news of one of their children, who was at school at Twickenham, and had to hasten thither. Adela was tryingly cross and contrary at table: she had not wished to be alone with her husband, lest he should have found out what she had done, and begin upon it. So, after the first few minutes, the meal proceeded nearly in silence. She did not fear the explosion quite as much as she did at first: each hour as it went on smoothly, helped to make her uneasiness less.

But she was not to escape long. Just as the servants were quitting the room, leaving the wine on the table, one of them came back again.

"Mr. Howard has called, sir. He says he would not disturb you at this hour, but he must see you on a matter of pressing business."

"Pressing business!" echoed Mr. Grubb. "Show Mr. Howard in. A chair, Richard, and glasses."

The stiff and stern old man entered, bowing to Lady Adela. His iron-grey hair looked greyer than usual, and his black coat rusty. Rusty coats are worn by more than one millionaire.

"Why, Howard, this is quite an event for you! Why did you not come in time for dinner? Sit down. Anything new? Anything happened?"

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Howard, who was a slow-speaking man, giving one the idea that the bump of caution must be large on his head. "Thank you, port."

"What is it?" enquired the senior partner.

"I will enter upon the matter presently," replied James Howard, deliberately sipping his wine. By which answer Mr. Grubb of course understood that he would only speak when they were alone.

Lady Adela swallowed her strawberries and left her seat so quickly that Mr. Grubb could hardly get to the door in time to open it, and she went up to the drawing-room. She felt sure, as sure as though she could read his very thoughts, that "that horrid Howard" had come about the cheque. She did not care so much that her husband should find it out; he might do his best and his worst, and the worst from him she did not dread greatly; but that that old ogre should know it, perhaps take steps—oh, that was quite another thing. *Could* he take steps?—would the law justify it? Adela did not know; but she began to give the reins to her imagination, and cowered in terror.

As she thus sat, her ears painfully alive to every sound, a cab rattled into the square, and stopped at the door. It brought Charles Cleveland. Charley had just come up from Netherleigh; the train was late, and he was in a desperate hurry to get into his dress-clothes, to attend a "spread"—it was what Charley called it—given by his brother. Adela ran out, and arrested him as he was making for his room, three stairs at a time.

"Charley, I want to speak to you—just for a moment. What mortal haste you are in!"

In haste he was: but to be pressed thus into the drawing-room by her, to meet her again after this temporary absence, was to him as light breaking in upon darkness. "Oh Charles," she added, giving him both her hands in agitation, "surely some good fairy sent you! I am in deep distress."

"Can I soothe it?" he asked, wondering at her emotion, and retaining her hands in his. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I am in sore need of a friend—to—to shelter me," she continued. "Great, desperate need!"

"Can I be that friend? Suffer me if you can. *Suffer* me to be, Lady Adela. Dear! dear! what can have happened?"

"But it may bring danger upon you, difficulty, even disgrace. I believe I ought not to ask it of you."

"Danger and difficulty would be welcome, borne for you," returned Charley in his loyalty. "Believe that, Lady Adela."

He could not imagine what was amiss, and he caught somewhat of her agitation. That she was in real trouble, nay, in terror, was all too plain. For a moment the thought occurred—was Mr. Grubb angry with her on his account? Oh, what a privilege it appeared to him, foolish but honest-hearted fellow, to be asked to shield her!

"I will trust you," she cried, her emotion increasing. "That cheque—but oh, Charles, do not you think ill of me! It was done in a moment of irritation."

"Say on, dear Lady Adela."

"That cheque—he did not give it me. I had asked him for money, and he refused. I wanted it badly; and I was angry with him: *so I drew the cheque.*"

Charley felt all at sea, not comprehending in the least. She saw it:

and was forced to go on with her painful explanation. The colour was coming and going in her cheek; now white as a lily, now rose-red.

"That cheque you cashed for me on Saturday morning, Charley. Mr. Grubb did not draw it. Mr. Howard's name was signed as well as his; and—and he is with my husband in the dining-room, and I am frightened to death."

There was a momentary pause. Charley understood now, and saw all the *difficulty* of the matter, as she had lightly called it. But his honest love for her was working strongly in his heart, and he formed a hasty, chivalrous resolve to shield her if he could. Had she not appealed to him?

"I want you not to say that it was from me you had the cheque, Charley."

"I never will say it. Rely upon me."

"They cannot *do* anything to me, I suppose; or to anyone else," she went on. "It is the exposure that would drive me wild. I could not bear that even that old Howard should know it was I. Oh, Charles, what can be done?"

"Be at ease, Lady Adela. You shall never repent your confidence. Not a breath of suspicion shall come near you. I will shield you; I am proud to do it; shield you, if need be, with my life. You little know how valueless that life would be without your society, dear Lady Adela."

"Now Charles, hold your tongue. You must not take to say such things to me. They are not right—and are all nonsense besides. What would Mr. Grubb think?"

"Forgive me," murmured Charley, all repentance. "I did not mean to say aught that was disloyal to him or to you, Lady Adela. I could not be capable of it, now, or ever. And I will keep my word—to shield you through this trouble. I repeat it. I swear it."

He wrung her hand in token of good faith, and escaped to keep his engagement. She sat down, somewhat reassured, but not at all easy in her conscience. The world just now seemed rather hard to the Lady Adela.

(*To be continued.*)

A PEEP AT MELBOURNE IN 1881.

OF course there are very few Englishmen nowadays who retain that old and exploded idea that any Australian town is but a collection of shanties, situated in a remote corner of the world, only fitted for producing unknown quantities of gold to enrich the shoals of ne'er-do-wells who, among others, once went out—nay, even now emigrate in hundreds every year—to that golden land: that land of blighted hopes in some cases, of honest toil and industry rewarded in others.

Modern Melbourne—if such a term can be applied to a city barely fifty years old—is one of the cleanest, as it certainly is one of the best laid-out cities in the world. With a rapidly increasing population, at present estimated at 190,000, it bids fair in years to come to attain nearly the proportions of New York. The first peculiarity which strikes a stranger is the absence of beer-shops, gin-palaces, or taverns. It must not be inferred from this that the city is conducted on strictly teetotal principles; far from it. The simple solution is, that the veriest little beer-shop is called in Melbourne, and, indeed, throughout Australia, an *hotel*, and there are dozens of them, though not more, perhaps, than will be found in an English city of the same size; and it must be confessed that more intoxication is seen in one night among the newly-arrived passengers from a large vessel from London, than in a week among the ordinary population of the city.

From the shipping advertisements it might be imagined that Melbourne is actually by the sea; but such is not the case. All ships from England land their passengers and cargo either at Williamstown or Sandridge, both situated in Hobson's Bay, respectively five and two-and-a-half miles from the city: the one noted for its dulness, the other for its dust. Sandridge, however, is the most convenient port of the two, as it has a station, with a good service of trains close to the landing or railway pier; and omnibuses and buggies, a sort of light covered waggon to seat five, ply continuously between it and all parts of Melbourne.

Whilst alluding to the railways it may not be out of place to say that there are only two classes of carriages, first and second, and that the fares, though reasonable on the whole, vary much, in accordance with the line you patronise.

If the visitor to Melbourne cares for boating, he can indulge his proclivities to the utmost on the river Yarra, which slowly meanders through the city from east to west, ultimately falling into Hobson's Bay midway between Williamstown and Sandridge. This river does not supply the Melbournites with water for drinking purposes; for this last, by a clever piece of engineering, is brought from springs at

Yan-Yean, seventeen miles away, in a state of absolute purity: thus offering a great contrast to certain English water companies, who are not particular as to the water they provide—their chief consideration being that all rates shall be paid with punctuality, and that the so-called water shall contain as much solid vegetable or animal matter as is consistent with its flowing through the pipes laid down for it.

But to return to Melbourne. Another peculiarity is the drainage system. It is all on the surface; and the street gutters, into which a good deal of the surplus water falls, or rather runs, fed by pipes just underneath the pavement, look, especially after a heavy rainfall, like dissipated brooks hurrying, like other vagrants, off to sea.

In the larger streets, these gutters are crossed by a small, sideless bridge from the pavement well into the road, which is very necessary, seeing that at times, after a heavy, semi-tropical rainfall, the streets are quite impassable.

The number of dining-rooms and restaurants in Melbourne is prodigious, considering the size of the place. In Bourke Street, which may be said to correspond with the Strand in London, though a good deal longer and about double the width, the dining-rooms may be seen in their greatest variety. In most of them, as in nearly all Australian towns, you can get a good dinner, fairly well served—soup, meat, pudding, bread, cup of tea or coffee, and attendance—for sixpence. Fish, which is scarce and bad, and poultry, are, of course, very much dearer. But at any first-class hotel a good dinner, served in first-rate style, after the manner of the London high-class table-d'hôte, can be had for a couple of shillings, including attendance, but not, of course, ale or wine.

The cheapness of meat is probably too well known to need recapitulation, but it may interest a few to hear that on Saturday night the whole side of sheep can be bought for one-and-sixpence or one-and-eightpence; that the average price of mutton per pound throughout the year is twopence-halfpenny, and beef a penny dearer.

Fruit is both good and cheap, grapes and apples more especially, while the greater part of the trade in vegetables is in the hands of the industrious Chinese, whose quarter of the city is Little Bourke Street. In this street may be found genuine Chinese tea merchants, on whose doors and windows quaint and mysterious devices are painted, the dragon figuring largely among them; opium dens, and also a joss house, or temple, dedicated to Buddha. In fact, it is, in miniature, a perfect reflex of the streets of Peking or Canton.

The Australians, as is well known, have shown their fondness for the old country, as they call England, by naming many of their towns and cities after places dear to them at home. Thus, in or adjoining Melbourne, we have Richmond, Camberwell, Kensington, Brighton, and many other familiar names too numerous to mention. The last of these, and also St. Kilda, are fashionable suburban watering-places, each with a good pier and parade. But the stranger, or “new

chum," fresh from England, misses one thing, and that is bathing-machines. Woe be to the venturesome swimmer who, in defiance of all advice, strikes out from the shore, for he is as likely as not to get an arm or a leg snatched off by a hungry shark. These dangerous fish swarm in Hobson's Bay, and, indeed, on nearly all the coast of Australia, so that to bathe in the open sea is a very venturesome, not to say dangerous pastime. It is to make up for this great want that baths have been formed at several places, consisting of a piece of water fenced in with strong wire, connected with the beach by a pier, on which are dressing-rooms, &c., so that people can bathe at their ease without any fear of encountering the "tiger" of the seas when they are least prepared for him.

The two leading thoroughfares in Melbourne are Collins Street and Bourke Street. The former is for the most part occupied by crowds of business and professional men, engaged in the various banks, offices, and the Exchange. The magnificent blocks of buildings which adorn this handsome street from end to end prove conclusively that the Australians can hold their own with any nation as regards that much neglected art, street architecture. But from about four to six, the crowds on the broad pavement undergo an extraordinary change in their composition; for now, in front of a magnificent row of shops, among which are the finest linen-draperies and milliners in the city, may be seen all the beauty and fashion of Melbourne and its far-stretching suburbs, the *crème de la crème* of Victorian fashionable life. Collins Street puts off its business aspect, and, as if by magic, is transformed into the colonial Rotten Row. If any English lady doubts that the women of Victoria can look well and dress fashionably, let her go to Melbourne, wait until the above-mentioned hour, and see the mothers and daughters of the "upper ten" doing—to use the colonial phrase—"the block." By six the promenaders are gone, there is a scamper and rush of city men hurrying off to catch their trains or omnibuses, and by eight, Collins Street, which is one third broader than the Broadway of New York, is comparatively speaking deserted.

Not so its companion street, Bourke Street. In that busy thoroughfare the stream of life, which has been flowing all day long, now becomes busier than ever as night draws on. Theatres, concert-halls, waxworks, shooting galleries, all open their doors to receive large numbers of the seething crowd, ever eager to be amused; for Melbourne is wonderfully like New York in its love for amusements, as also it is for the possession of that peculiar quality known to the Americans as "go-aheadism." It is safe to say that every place of amusement in Melbourne is to be found only in Bourke Street. One of the theatres, the Royal, is peculiar as having for its manager a veteran actor, Mr. George Coppin, who is also an M.P. !

For those who do not care for theatrical amusements there is, among other entertainments, the waxworks to go to. This is not quite up to the standard of Madame Tussaud's famous exhibition in

Baker Street ; but at the same time it is very entertaining to those who are fond of riddles. The inquiring "new chum" may stand for hours guessing wildly as to whom certain effigies represent. After which, if his strength will permit, he can either buy a catalogue or take a cab from the door to a large stone building, standing in its own grounds, about a mile and a half distant, styled by the vulgar and uncouth, The Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum.

In Russell Street there is a handsome building known as the Temperance Hall and Reading Room, also Library. The building belongs to the Melbourne Temperance Society, a body who have done, and are doing, an immense amount of sterling good work, which in time no doubt will bring forth good fruit. The reading-room, in which are all the colonial dailies and weeklies, contains a first-rate library, the books from which, in common with the papers, may be freely read by any person who pays a penny at the door.

As regards public buildings, Melbourne will rank quite as high as a great many cities very much larger, wealthier, and older ; but in church architecture the capital of Victoria certainly does not shine. To attempt to describe the Exhibition would take up far too much space. Suffice it to say that it is in a picturesque locality, known as Carlton Gardens, and bids fair, when finished, to completely throw in the shade its quondam rival in New South Wales.

It is wonderfully easy to find one's way about the city, all the streets being laid out at right angles.

The principal parks are Albert Park and Princes Park ; the former containing a handsome edifice devoted to Her Majesty's representative in Victoria, and also the magnificent ground of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Princes Park, about two miles from the heart of the city, is chiefly remarkable for a small but select collection of wild animals and birds, and for its beautiful specimens of tropical vegetable life. It is situated on the Sydney Road, in days of yore a mere bush-track, but now a handsome macadamised highway, about four miles up which, behind a handsome row of plane trees, stands one of the largest penal establishments not only in the Australian colonies, but in the world. It is called Pentridge, a name well known and hated by every criminal in the colony. In it every trade is represented ; bootmakers, tailors, hatters, printers, all are there. Many hundred men are actively engaged all day long ; and a year or so back, several Melbourne tradesmen, beginning to feel adversely the result of this unequal competition, presented a memorial to the Chief Secretary, praying that the sale of articles made at Pentridge should be more restricted. Some alterations were accordingly made ; but even now the place puts one forcibly in mind of a miniature manufacturing town, with its lofty shafts and chimneys. One look at the wretched dress and large straw hats of the convicts, not to mention the watchful sentinels armed with their deadly rifles, soon dispels the illusion, and brings the looker-on back to all the painful realities of

life's shady side. In this prison, dragging out a miserable existence, are several well-known bushrangers, notably Power, who not many years back made travelling as dangerous as Dick Turpin and his followers in the good old days of our ancestors to the wealthy citizens of London on Hounslow Heath.

Quitting this rather dreary theme, a word may be said about Flemington. This little place is about six miles from Melbourne, and is dear to all Australian lovers of sport by reason of its race-course, pronounced by all good judges to be unequalled as regards its position, for from any part of the ground the entire immense course can be seen by anyone, and the horses can be kept in view from the start to the finish.

The Melbourne Cup, which is to the Australians what our Derby is to us, always attracts an immense concourse of people from all parts of the Australian continent. The rough element, so prominent a feature at an English race meeting, is conspicuous by its absence, as the police look after them more strictly than they do here. That class of persons commonly called "roughs" in England are known throughout Australia as "larrikins," a term more expressive than euphonious. It is this class, as a rule, which gives so many subjects for police reports in the Melbourne newspapers. Melbourne journalism is very fair on the whole, though occasionally rather unequal. The principal daily papers are the "Argus" (the "Times" of Melbourne), the "Age," "Daily Telegraph," and "Herald." The first of these is a first-class paper in every way, containing thoroughly well-written articles, and all the latest European and Colonial news. The other papers call for no special mention, with the exception of the "Herald," a penny evening paper which is famous for circulating extraordinary rumours one evening and contradicting them the next. At the same time, however, it occupies a very high place among colonial newspapers, and the little failing above mentioned is not entirely unknown among certain of our English journals.

One word in conclusion as to the scenery of Melbourne. There is no use disguising it: Melbourne, that is the country round it, is not pretty, but there is one exception to prove the rule. Let the visitor to Melbourne make his way to a tiny village called Broadmeadows, nine miles away, and if the lovely scenery does not put him in mind of some of the sweetest spots in the dear old country so far away, he must be a man hard to please.

But now the curtain must fall; the busy city fades from our sight. To the writer, Australia, with its glorious sun and bright blue skies, is gone, never to return. All that remains to him of the great city under the glorious stars of the Southern Cross is a creature of imagination, a child of fancy, a memory of the past.

THE SHUT-UP HOUSES.

BY ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO, AUTHOR OF "THE OCCUPATIONS OF A RETIRED LIFE," "THE MYSTERY OF DR. HARDY'S MARRIAGE," &c.

IV.

"I WILL tell you my history," said Miss Turner, fixing a wistful gaze upon Mr. Duncan. "It will open flood-gates that have been long closed, and probe wounds that only death can heal; but there is something that compels me to open my heart to you. Strange as that will be, it is not more strange than the fact of your being in this room, where for years no intruder has set foot."

Mr. Duncan did not speak, but the sympathy he felt needed no form of words to declare itself.

"I was born in this very house," she went on, after a moment's pause, "and so was my sister Agatha, who died lately," and she named a date, which was thirty years back.

"When we were children we were the gayest of the gay. We had no mother, but our father indulged us in everything that was for our benefit. We had a carriage to drive in: we had excellent masters for the accomplishments that were taught in those days: we were taken to the hills and the sea for our health. We saw very little company, except gentlemen who used to come to see my father, apparently on business, and then stay and spend the evening. Very fine gentlemen they were. I've heard the highest titles in the land used in that room overhead, which was then the drawing-room. And they all paid great deference to my father and had many compliments for Agatha and me. And sometimes we noticed some of the younger ones seemed very sad and gloomy, and we used to be so sorry for them! But when we grew to be young women, the gentlemen were never asked to spend the evening in the drawing-room, and if by any chance one did so, my father required us to keep our own rooms in the higher stories of the house.

"It was in those days that old Hannah came to be our servant—not a house-servant, but a sort of personal attendant for Agatha and me. And very soon after that, somebody came courting me. I will own that it was he I thought of when your strange message was sent in to me. He was none of my father's fine gentlemen friends, but the pupil of an architect whom my father had employed on some of his property. My father was very angry about it, and it was then that Agatha and I first began to notice what solitary lives we had led, and how my father had withdrawn us from all kinds of society. It was not that my father objected to anything in my lover himself: he had made a great favourite of him even before I knew him, and while he

spoke harshly to me of our affection for each other, he owned how good and clever he was.

"Years afterwards, when I found out all the truth of our history, I fancied my father had meant to take us far away—perhaps to the Continent—and introduce us where nothing would be known of us, except that we were a rich man's daughters. He said something like this to me when wanting me to break off my engagement; but I was so full of my love, with all its joy and pain, that I did not pay much attention except my own resolution to be faithful to the end."

She paused again for a moment, and then went on.

"I never knew much of Paul's family. He had no nearer kin than a married sister, who lived in France. So there was nobody to take our part. But I would have gone away and married him then and there, only that his health broke down, and the doctor said his one chance of life was a long voyage and a change of climate. I would still have married him at once and gone with him, but we had no money of our own, and all we could do was to weep and part, translating the doctor's forlorn 'one chance' into a brighter 'certainty.' I deceived myself, sir—if we did not deceive ourselves sometimes, I don't think we could endure life at all—but this I know, when I stole out to the docks to watch him go aboard his ship, I knew I should never see him again in this world.

"Everything went on the same at home. Father made believe to forget everything, and was as kind to me as ever—even kinder. But one day, after breakfast, he kissed us both and went out, as was his wont, and he never, never came home again. No, never," she said, springing up like a girl, "never. It's sixty years ago since I last saw him that day, and I know no more what happened to him than we knew that first terrible night."

"O that has been a grievous trial," cried Mr. Duncan.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she said, with a sudden return to her quiet commonplace manner. "Nobody knows what that is till they've tried it. Ah," she exclaimed, looking up, "that explains to me how mystery makes one fancy dreadful things! I went through and through the house, feeling as if father was shut up somewhere just out of our hearing. And when, in the course of the inquiries which were set on foot, strangers came about the place, I used to wonder whether this one or that one had murdered him."

"Terrible!" muttered Mr. Duncan.

"And then it came out that he had left great wealth behind him," she went on; "and also that he had made it by money-lending and bitter extortions. In the newspaper articles that were written about his strange disappearance he was called all sorts of bad names—'old villain,' 'usurer,' and the like. And they were true. Only he was our father and had always been kind to us.

"There was worse to follow. It came out that our mother had not died when we were babies, as we had always been led to believe, but that she was divorced from our father for her own selfish wickedness, and had only died after we were grown up, and that we girls had known her name in the public prints as a shameful woman ! And, oh ! they made a ballad of it all, and sang it through the open streets. They sang it down here. We had to go into the back rooms not to hear it. And none of the neighbours sent them away," she added, with a vivid recollection of what had been the bitterest sting in that hour of humiliation—the sense of loneliness, the withdrawing of sympathy.

"I've heard one of your present neighbours speaking very kindly of you to-day," said Mr. Duncan.

"Ah, these present neighbours only know me old and miserable," she replied, with painful cynicism. "You see the others had to rejoice over the downcome of happiness, and beauty, and wealth."

"No, no ; it is not good for you to think that !" cried Mr. Duncan, "You own your father had done wrong. By their love of justice, the people could not help feeling it meet when punishment overtook him. Because you loved him, you suffered with him, just as God suffers with us all when we sin and suffer."

"We had scarcely any money. Of course we could not touch our father's property while there was no proof that he was dead. The only person who came forward to act as a friend for us was an old attorney of my father's—a base, bad man, who was mixed up with all sorts of wickedness. He managed our business for us somehow, and doled us out pittances from somewhere. Hannah was faithful to us. But the other servants left, partly because they were afraid their wages might not be paid, and partly, as they frankly told us, because they might lose their characters if they stayed with such discreditable people as they found we were. It was bitter. But I see now we had no right to demand others to sacrifice themselves for us.

"Agatha was quite different from me. She cried a good deal. She would have borne on somehow through those days. She would never have left off going to church. She would have gone on dealing with the old tradespeople, though they would give nothing except for ready money, and we had only pence to spend where once we had had pounds. Consequently, if ever a ray of sunshine had come near our lives, Agatha would have been there to catch it. But my blood was high and hot—it seems leaping and burning again to-day.—Oh, why did you waken me ?—I had always taken the lead. I would not bear. I could not make the best of what seemed so bad. 'Let us shut ourselves up,' I said. 'We are three together faithful to each other. We are sacrificing very little : we shall not want the world till Paul comes back ; all will then go well again.'

"Oh, it seemed such peace for a time ! Such peace not to see

the curious, sneering faces—not to have to parry the cruel, inquisitive questions. Agatha and Hannah, who had not liked the idea at first, owned I had been right, and were glad they had let me have my own way. We were almost happy. I daresay folks who have just escaped shipwreck don't notice at first that they are ashore on a desert island. I have got yards of lace which Agatha made in those days, intending them for my wedding dress! And then in the twilight we used to talk of what we should do when Paul came back.

"But he never came! I used to feel a strange sinking of heart sometimes when I read his letters; yet there was really nothing in them to prepare me for the end—when somebody else wrote, saying he was dead. I don't remember much about that time. I don't think that announcement letter was ever acknowledged. I know I never heard where Paul was buried. The days, and weeks, and months just went by.

"Do you suppose a day would come when we could say to each other, 'Now let us go out into the world again'? Never. I was the one who had the force to shut the prison door upon us all, but I had no force left to open it. And what was there for us in the outside world? Nothing.

"The old lawyer went on doling us out pittances for years. He brought papers for us to sign sometimes; and we always signed them. He paid himself well for all he did for us or lent us; but had he stripped us of everything, I don't think we should have resisted. And when the old leases of our house property fell in, he said they could not be renewed, as there was nobody who could satisfactorily grant new ones. That is how those houses first stood empty. At last he told us that he believed we might now get a decree, whereby my father would be regarded as legally dead, and we should be able to act in his stead. And the very day that he got that rightly arranged—on his way to his home after telling us that we were now the mistresses of our own property—the poor old man dropped down dead in the street.

"Was this likely to send us back into the cruel world? What were we now but three women, disgraced, friendless, helpless, and ignorant of business—deprived of the one adviser on whom we had learned to lean? When the estate thus became ours, we found ourselves in possession, besides the houses, of a funded sum of money, on whose interest we have lived ever since as you see us now.

"We never meant things to be thus. Oh, sir! it would have needed unnatural strength to build such a jail for oneself, and walk into it, reading one's own sentence of sixty years' imprisonment. We were not unnaturally strong. We were rather unhealthily weak. At first we thought it would all end when somebody came home, who never came; and after that, when we did not know what to expect, we still seemed to expect something to come some day and deliver us.

"You can't tell how time slips by when all days are alike. Agatha died, poor thing. It's odd how often the people who can't do much else can generally do that quite easily. Hannah, the servant, and I drew together more than did Agatha, my sister, and I. I always felt that Agatha somehow lost her own will in staying with us : she did not give it in heartily. Now Hannah did. Agatha stayed here because she did not know what else to do. Hannah stayed because she chose it. She could easily have got another situation, and she had her own friends and relations in the country. But she stuck to us all through, and we never had any other help or service till she was struck down by paralysis two years ago, and then we got the girl you saw. She is an orphan grandniece of Hannah, and was in a work-house in Norfolk before she came here.

"It is nearly two years since Hannah spoke. I missed her awfully at first. I missed her, dead in life before my eyes, more than I had ever missed Agatha, dead in her grave. Hannah was a woman who spoke up, and laughed heartily ; besides, she was the last I could converse with. I shall never see anybody else who knew Paul. But one grows used to anything. And I suppose God will let even Hannah and me die at last."

She spoke calmly, but almost as if she despaired of this last hope of the smitten. In truth, she had had her nervous horrors on that point. She had had recollections of the famous patriarch, Henry Jenkins, with his century and a half of earthly existence. At night she had had dreams of the weird legend of the Wandering Jew.

Mr. Duncan felt his heart sink within him at the thought of this woman's life, past and present. "But, my dear madam," he cried, "this will not do. You may live for years yet. Do to-day what you feel should have been done years ago. Why, if I have to feel that you are still sitting here like this, and the old pain is still going on, I shall never be able to bear my own happy life, for the remembrance of what I have seen and heard from you to-day."

She shook her head gently. Then she stretched out her thin, blanched hand, and laid it softly on his arm.

"It is not pain now," she said ; "it is part of myself. I am glad to have been reminded that I was not always so. It renews my hope that some day I shall be so no more. I shall die the sooner for your coming to-day ; a very light breeze shakes off a dead leaf. God bless you."

"Nay, nay, but it is not our part to meddle with what is in God's hands," pleaded the young man. "To do right to-day is our business, and that will stand us in good stead, whether we die to-night or whether we live for fifty years longer. Now, I would not say to you return to the noisy world and its ways ; you do not want that now, and your sufferings have surely earned you the right to a quiet retreat. But take some kind thought and care for others into your seclusion ; for their sake, and no less for your own."

"I know nobody to think about," she answered simply. "You cannot imagine how it confused me when I had to get Alice—that is the girl—to come here. I tried my utmost to do all the work myself, so that no other human creature might be enticed to enter this doomed house. But Hannah was not quite unconscious at that time, and when she saw me at my housework, she used to cry and wail so that it was quite pitiful to hear her. And then she fretted about the great-niece in the poor-house, where none of her family had ever been before. It was more for Hannah's sake than my own that I permitted the girl to come here. And every time she comes into the room I ask myself, 'Is she to grow up like this?' I would not have taken a girl from her own home for worlds, but this was a poor orphan, left among strangers, and even this dismal life is better than the life to which, in my young days, I was told such girls often fall. But I feel as if I was letting Alice enter into the curse which has blighted us. You see, I do think of other people when I know them," she said, forlornly.

Mr. Duncan saw his opportunity and rushed to seize it.

"Ah," he said, "the world, dear lady, is full of sin and sorrow, and needs all our help. The property which you have been led into allowing to lie waste, would educate crowds of little children, or solace hundreds of sick people, or help scores of young folk to start in life. If any of us have any means of doing good, God means us to use them to their utmost limit. He has given you the talent of wealth. Do not bury it in shut-up houses."

"You don't know what it is to be shut up for sixty years, with one's mind filled with images of crime and a bitter sense of wrong," she said. "Paul's vanished love—Paul's death—was the brightest thought I had, and you can understand if that was a diamond it was set in jet. I feel as if I had been in the dark, and you had come suddenly and let in a flood of sunshine. I am blinded. I can't talk more to-day. You have made me live more in one hour than I have lived in all these sixty years. You must come again."

"Certainly I will come again, if you will allow me," he answered. "But I should like you to have a talk with some friends of mine—through whom I heard the first hint of your existence—the Rev. Mr. Lane, of St. Mitre's, Hay Hill, a prudent, just-minded man, and the parish doctor there, Dr. Bird, who knows all the best and safest ways of doing good."

"Mr. Lane—Dr. Bird," she murmured. "But I shan't want anybody but you. I shall not take to anybody else as I have taken to you. It was partly through your strange message—and partly through a look you have. I suppose it cannot be—can it?—it is not possible that you can be any distant relation of Paul's? You have never heard such a name as Paul Desmoulins among your family connections?"

"No," said Mr. Duncan, "nor do I think I could ever have had a re-

lation of that name. There has not been to my knowledge a foreign graft on our family trees since they were planted. My father was of Scotch descent and my mother was Irish, born and bred."

"Well, I supposed it could not be," she answered, "only certainly you are somehow like my Paul. You have a curious look of him just before we said 'good-bye' for the last time."

They spoke little more to each other after that. But she took his hand and led him to the old arm-chair, where the faithful maid Hannah sat, deaf, dumb, and motionless.

"One cannot be quite sure what she knows," said Miss Turner, with a strange softening. "Touch her hand. Good as I am sure you are, you may yet be proud to do that. She was faithful for sixty years. Perhaps her heart is alive still."

But if either the old woman or the young man vaguely expected responsive sign, they were doomed to disappointment. Miss Turner drew back with a heavy sigh.

"Go," she said, "or in a minute I shall begin to cry. And it is such pain. Go, but come back soon."

The little brown serving-maid was waiting in the hall to let him out. She had not been trained to render these civilities. She only obeyed a childish longing to see that kind face once again.

And when Mr. Duncan was again out in the street he felt like one newly awakened from a bewildering dream. Had he really spent the last hour in the same world with these crowds of people bustling to and fro, buying and selling? He lifted his hat from his head, and let the fresh breeze play on his forehead and call him back to a realization of the every-day side of life.

As he went away he turned and looked up at the frowning, shut-up houses. Murders? Ghosts? He felt that Miss Turner had spoken well when she said that there had been three slow murders; and he felt, too, that he had just left the presence of the most awful of ghosts—the ghost of a life.

And what had wrought it all?

Only such sins as remained too common among the masses, who would yet shrink appalled from this, their awful sum total. Among the people hastening past him, among the dwellers on Hay Hill and in Wharf Street were many who would have no right to throw a stone at the sinful woman whose shame had been so terribly visited on her daughters, or at the covetous man the labours of whose life had literally turned to dust and ashes.

"Heaven have mercy on us all," said the young lawyer to himself, solemnly. "We may know what we do, but we scarcely know what we leave undone."

V.

It came to pass that that was young Mr. Duncan's last long walk. He went out again two or three times : he took his aunt to a scientific lecture, and there he caught cold, and then he went out next day in the rain to attend a law court in behalf of a poor old artist whose case he would not trust to anybody less keen and enthusiastic than himself.

As a consequence of all this, on the third morning he awoke in the clutches of his very familiar enemy, bronchitis. Nobody thought much of it : it is a common fact of experience that people seldom die of their chronic maladies. His aunt Rachel at first felt inclined to give him the usual lecture he received on these occasions, but there was something in his aspect which checked her remonstrances. But every time she came in and out of the sick room her face was more and more grave. And yet when, at last, the elder maid-servant, noticing this, grew grave too, Aunt Rachel felt as if she resented it. And Dr. Bird called—and called back again.

But it was quite late on the third evening after his first seizure that the type of his disease changed. Poor Aunt Rachel, who had nursed him through a dozen such attacks, and knew every step of the way, suddenly found herself on new ground.

The light of consciousness faded from the kind eyes : the cheery voice began to murmur of things which Aunt Rachel, stooping tenderly over her dear nephew, could not altogether understand.

There were some men about Hay Hill who had "thought Duncan rather soft," who, perhaps, had secretly chuckled over cheating him. He spoke of them once or twice. Perhaps they might not have liked to hear what he said. But the wandering mind did not dwell on the dark side. It went off to ancient kindnesses and pleasures. Poor Mr. Duncan, in his delirium, thanked sundry people over and over again for very infinitesimal favours received years and years before.

Then he turned to what he wanted to do. He fretted a little about the poor old artist and his unfinished lawsuit. He whispered about little presents he would like given to this one or to that. These were the thoughts of his first patient days of illness suddenly made audible. Aunt Rachel sat with straining ears. But there was a great deal she could not understand.

And then towards morning there was an awful silence. And when the street was once more astir, the blinds of Mr. Duncan's house were drawn.

"He spoke much about some old lady," said Aunt Rachel, when it was all over, and she sat dry-eyed, as brave women do sit, as long as there is something for them to do for sake of their beloved one. "He seemed so desirous to help her. Look over the list of the

clients for the old lady," she directed the clerk, "and then we must take care that she gets some other trustworthy adviser, now he is gone. But where shall we find one like him!"

The clerk looked carefully through the list of clients, through the "callers' book," and through the recent correspondence; but he could find no clue to any such person as his master's dying words had indicated.

Aunt Rachel had to get through her days of trial as best she could. There was plenty for her to do. She persisted in seeing everybody who called seeming to have any business with him. The old maid-servant could not understand her mistress. "I know how Miss Rachel loved him," she said, "an' I'm feared her head's going wrong."

In this troubled state of mind she was sweeping out the entry on the morning of the funeral, when a little pale, shy girl in a brown gown came timidly up to the door, and asked if a Mr. Duncan lived there—somebody had sent her for him. The old servant gave a side glance at the girl's shabby dress and meagre appearance, and did not even pause in her sweeping while she abruptly replied that Mr. Duncan was dead. Nor did she inquire for any name or address; she did not want to have such to deliver to her poor overburdened mistress. Her heart softened a little when she saw that the girl began to cry as she descended the steps, but it hardened again with the reflection that tears cost nothing, and are sometimes given in exchange for a great deal.

That afternoon Aunt Rachel stood weeping at her nephew's new grave in a far-off Kentish churchyard, and on Hay Hill neighbours and townsfolk exchanged solemn kindly words about the good man they would see no more amongst them.

But nobody dreamed that in a shaded, silent house an old woman and an orphan girl wept bitterly for him whom they had seen but once, and now should see no more on earth. Miss Turner repeated to herself again and again the words of his strange message. And how nearly an angel's visit had his been!

Like a touch of golden sunset on a prison or a scaffold, his death had shed a sudden sweet pathos over a hard and bitter tragedy of sixty years' length. Eyes that had scarcely wept for more than half a century rained softly for him; and in that gentle rain the mists of dull despair were washed away, and the shores of heaven gleamed once more on the gray horizon of those blighted lives. God had not forsaken them.

Yet the shut-up houses did not change. All remained the same. Nobody could guess that a petrified heart had been suddenly stirred into divine discontent and diviner aspiration.

Outwardly all went on the same for two years. Only the grocer in Wharf Street noticed that all that time the little maid-servant attended church regularly, and occasionally went out apparently for a long

walk. Also a daily newspaper was supplied to the recluse household, and a great many packets were left at the door by errand-boys.

But after two years had passed, the end came. One night the little brown maid presented herself, trembling, at Dr. Bird's door, and led off that astonished gentleman to Wharf Street. Miss Turner was ill. The doctor, knowing nothing of her constitution, was inclined to think hopefully of matters, but she, herself, knew better. She knew she was dying, and she instructed him immediately to send a nurse to help and cheer the maid in her dreary watching. Beyond this, she entered into no conversation with the medical man. He heard her name, of course, and having a strong suspicion who she was, he surveyed her dwelling and surroundings with considerable curiosity. But he found her reserved, and the young servant taciturn. Only he noticed in the dying woman an almost oppressive anxiety to consider the comfort and guide the understanding of those who would be left behind her.

The one confidence she reposed in him was on this line. She told him that, except for the young attendant, and a helplessly invalided old servant, she was quite alone in the world, but that there was a letter by her bedside, directed to the Rev. Mr. Lane, of St. Mitre's, which was to be given to that gentleman immediately after her death; and further, she charged Dr. Bird and the servant, in the presence of each other, to remember that all papers of importance would be found in a certain small oaken chest which stood on her toilet table.

She died quite quietly. She never alluded to her approaching end except by the minute arrangements she had made for it. She continued speaking to the little servant on ordinary matters till within an hour of her death; speaking, as the weeping girl afterwards reported, very cheerfully and kindly, with a strange impatient gladness in her manner. Then she lay in a sort of trance-like sleep till the end, when she opened her eyes and smiled. And with that smile on her face she died, and lay, so smiling, in her coffin.

Dr. Bird arrived on his regular visit an hour after her decease. He took possession of the letter to the clergyman, and as soon as he had given immediately necessary instructions to the nurse, whom he left in charge of the house and the grief-stricken Alice, he hurried off to deliver it to Mr. Lane.

It was brief enough. It simply repeated the instructions she had given the doctor as to her papers, and further stated that she had taken the liberty of appointing the clergyman and the medical man as her executors.

The particulars of her property were found with her will in the little oaken chest she had indicated, and it was only on examining these that Mr. Lane and Dr. Bird found that she was actually the owner of the shut-up houses, and of other property, which, well used, would be worth nearly three thousand a year.

Her will, which was drawn up by herself, but had evidently been submitted to some legal approval, was strikingly simple. The two gentlemen were named as her executors, certain sums were to be set aside as provision for her two servants, and all the remainder of her estate was to be applied to such charitable and beneficial uses as her executors should direct, only she prayed them to give due consideration, though not necessarily consent, to sundry suggestions of her own which they would find set forth in another paper, also in the box.

It became, of course, their duty to go through and examine the personal effects in the house.

But they found little to tempt their curiosity. There were no letters. Certainly few letters had come to that house for sixty years, and they decided that Miss Turner had destroyed those of prior date.

They did not know—nobody ever knew—that just before Miss Turner's coffin was closed, the girl Alice, obeying some of her dead mistress's instructions, had stolen to the death-chamber, and had slipped into the coffin, beneath the cold hand, a little packet of old foreign epistles and a tiny miniature of a young man in old-fashioned costume. The girl had looked at it as she hid it from sight for ever. The face in the picture was so fresh, and young, and happy; the face in the coffin was happy too, but it was worn and old; for all the strange mockery of girlishness had faded from Miss Turner's face during the last months of her life. But the two were one still: all the long years and the dead silence had not quenched love. "God is love," murmured the girl Alice, whose mind had its busy workings in her strange, silent life, "so how could love die?" And she pressed one kiss on the little picture of him she had never seen, and another on the cold lips of her who had been her best friend, and then she shut the coffin-lid. And she felt as if she had shut them into their joy and rest, and herself out upon a bleak and lonesome world. And the nurse met her coming from the room, crying bitterly, and thought within herself that the odd monosyllabic girl was showing a little feeling at last!

But the gentlemen knew of none of these things. They found old certificates, old law papers, old receipts, a few old profiles of gentlemen in tie wigs and ladies in elaborate turbans. They found costly old lace and quaint old jewellery, and sundry knicknacks of less value, but pointing to some far-off girlhood of taste and accomplishment. They found nothing more.

But in the front parlour, which had been the dead woman's daily living room, they found a strange trace of modern life. There was a little pinched old bookcase filled with new books. There were books of recent biography and social science. There were books concerning education and every branch of good, progressive work going forward in the world.

"Singular, isn't it?" said Dr. Bird. "She seems only to have thought of these things lately. The very will, I observed, is dated only a month or two after those fools of women took their screaming fits in your church, which, if you remember, was just before poor Duncan's death, scarcely two years ago. From the very first time she sent for me, Lane, I have always wondered what put us into her head. Of course she had heard of you as a parish clergyman and a devoted, sensible man. But I can't understand how she ever heard of me, or came to send for a doctor from such a distance."

The clergyman could not understand it, either.

"She has not favoured all the three professions," added Dr. Bird, meditatively. "So we are free to choose what solicitor we will. If poor Duncan had been living I should have named him. Do you remember his asking you about Miss Turner, and your fancying he knew more than he showed. You see I was quite right when I said I didn't believe he knew anything. I daresay he was pondering whether he could hit on any plan to get the management of her estate into his hands. Quite legitimate and proper if it was so. Any man with his heart in his profession longs to do any bit of its work which is going undone."

"And he would have managed it honestly and well for her," observed the clergyman. "He was a fine, upright young fellow, and the parish misses him a good deal. He had a wonderful way with people, he could keep them in good temper: aye, and restore them to it, when they had got cantankerous."

And then they laid their heads together in consultation. They resolved to open the Hay Hill houses first, since these seemed to have been the most talked-of and romanced over. It had leaked out in the parish that the owner of these shut-up houses was dead, and that somehow Dr. Bird and the clergyman had assumed the control of her property. Therefore, many sharp eyes were keeping special watch. So one afternoon it spread like wildfire that the doctor and the parson were in front of the houses, trying great rusty keys in the damaged old locks. The errand-boys and shopmen rushed out madly, and stood around in grinning or breathless expectation. As for Miss Wince, she was very busy executing a wedding order, but when she heard the rumour she popped her head out of the window to see if it was true, and then threw on her bonnet and shawl, and peremptorily forbidding her apprentices to move, ran down-stairs, carrying a little band box as an ostensible reason for her outing. She was on the spot just at the moment when the door gave way and permitted free access to the house she most wanted to see—the house next her own. But Miss Wince liked to look genteel, and she coquetted with her intense curiosity till Mr. Lane, who had heard of her stories, smilingly invited her to enter.

"Well, thank you, sir, I don't mind," she said. "I'm not in a particular hurry; only these boys are so rough and striving! But here's Mrs. Brown. We two will just go in together."

What was there to see? No bones: no blood-stains: no nailed-up closets. Only the broken potsherds and refuse left by the last outgoing inhabitants; even innocent marks on the walls where their little children—who must be old folks now—had stood proudly to measure their growth. But Miss Wince, once out of the clergyman's sight, grew as impatient as anybody, and pushing her way upstairs, said significantly, and with a mysterious wink, "I did not expect to see anything down here. Come on, Mrs. Brown." And Mrs. Brown, fat and puffing, came on. Nor did Miss Wince spare her till they reached the attic floor, where she turned and said, with still deeper significance:

"Does the wind have two voices? Do rats swear?"

Mrs. Brown shook her head, too breathless to answer, and they both entered the big low attic, which in this house formed the whole of the topmost story. Their feet were the first which fell here, and they left a mark on the dusty floor, almost as they might on the sands of the sea. There was nothing to be seen but a few broken boards and bottles. Yes; something more. In that corner of the chamber near Miss Wince's bedroom lay a crumpled paper. Miss Wince pounced upon it with a cry of delight, which, however, ended in a prolonged "O—oh" of disappointment. The papers were a *Police News* and another common weekly print. They bore a date only about two years and a half back, and in the newspaper was a police advertisement for the apprehension of two men accused of burglary. Some tramps—it might well be the very men the police were hunting—had carried in these treasures with them, when they found what had proved a secure retreat.

Miss Wince recovered herself speedily. She quite forgot she had ever thought of ghosts. "You'll believe me another time, won't you?" she said, with a mild steadiness. "I knew it was not the wind. I knew it was not rats. Their language made my very blood run cold, and I might have been murdered in my bed. Would you have believed me then? Or would you have said I'd killed myself, and buried me under the lamp-post at the four corners? There's been a many so dealt with, I—do—firmly—believe."

But time has passed on, and all the shut-up houses have been pulled down. In Hay Hill the ground they covered is now occupied partly by a large foundation school and partly by a building which is used for literary and scientific classes and lectures, with a public reading-room, in all which Mr. Lane takes a warm and active interest, and which he finds a wonderful ally to his teaching in the neighbouring church. Hay Hill is greatly beautified by the change. The new buildings are of red brick faced with white freestone. Mr. Lane has caused evergreens to be planted within the railings which protect the

front, as well as in the great stone vases which flank the wide steps. A little open space separates these buildings from the neighbouring houses, and there he has planted some limes, and built a fountain, and put up a seat.

There is a dove-cot, too, whose gentle inmates the school children feed. It is very fresh and pretty already, and when the trees are fully grown there will be a cool, refreshing shade, beneath which old folks will sit and talk wisdom, and young lovers will come and say things most interesting to each other.

The shut-up house in the lawyers' quarter has been rebuilt, with all the modern improvements for people occupied with sedentary and studious business. The upper floors are let as offices, and command large rentals, which are devoted to salary a lawyer who occupies the ground-floor, and who is to hold his time and talents at the disposal of poor people who need legal advice, and to render them legal help when their cause is righteous.

When the great houses in Wharf Street were pulled down, they and their long, forlorn gardens left an enormous clearing. This was turned into an open quadrangle, about whose sides were built open, stall-like shops for the sale of fish, vegetables, and meat under the strictest supervision as to freshness and purity. In the centre of the quadrangle is a great stand for the sale of flowers and plants. Over the stalls are rows of neat little rooms where young orphan girls are trained in domestic service and in attendance on the sick, the inmates of the rooms being the helplessly aged or the hopelessly crippled—the rent of the stalls and the income of the remainder of Miss Turner's property being devoted to their maintenance. Her old servant Hannah died here, a well-authenticated centenarian; and in due time the girl Alice was qualified to act as matron to the homely institution.

It is a pretty sight on a summer day to see the contented-looking old folks sitting at their little windows watching the busy scene below, while their little attendants bustle to and fro, and every now and then the white-capped matron passes with a gentle smile and a quiet word. She wears a brown dress still; and though she is the kindest of the kind, the tenderest of the tender, her tongue has never grown swift and her shyness has not vanished. She has never broken down the reserve in which she shrouds the years she spent with Miss Turner, and all that happened therein.

Aunt Rachel left St. Mitre's parish soon after her dear nephew's death. But years afterwards, when she was growing quite an old woman, she came up on a visit, and was, of course, taken to see all the wonderful improvements. She owned they were beautiful and good. Only she could not help liking best the places that were not changed—the places which remained exactly as *he* had seen them.

There was not much change in St. Mitre's itself, and she lingered

after week-day morning service, and went up and down the aisles, looking at the old carvings and the familiar memorial stones. Suddenly she paused and said aloud : "This is new."

"Yes," said Mr. Lane, who had left his vestry and come up behind her. "That is new."

It was a stained glass window, very cool and soft in its colouring. It was in two divisions, neither of them very large. In one was a figure of our Master just as He turned to bless the sick woman who touched Him in the crowd ; and in the other was the figure of the sower scattering his seed on rock, and bramble, and good ground. And beneath the one was the inscription, "The bruised reed Thou shalt not break, and the smoking flax Thou dost not quench ;" and beneath the other, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

"That's beautiful," said Aunt Rachel. "That's exactly what I should have liked to put up to the memory of my boy. The figures and the words, too, would suit him exactly. I like stained glass windows for memorials : they are types of our own tender memories, with the Light of the World shining from behind them."

"There is a strange little history about that window," narrated Mr. Lane, as they left the church together. "It was put up by the young woman who was Miss Turner's servant, and is matron of the Home of Rest in Wharf Street."

"Was it not rather an expensive undertaking for her?" asked practical Aunt Rachel.

"Well, certainly it was," answered he. "And when she came to me and proposed it (she is a very still, reserved person) I ventured to hint as much. She was not at all offended ; only she reminded me that, besides her salary as matron, she possessed Miss Turner's annuity, and that since she had held her present position she had saved up three entire years' annuity for this very purpose."

"A singular fancy !" said Aunt Rachel, interested.

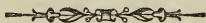
"So I thought," returned Mr. Lane. "I was always interested in the young woman. I am sure there is a great deal in her if it would only come out. But I am afraid she has formed an incorrigible habit of reserve. Some of these shy people do not open their minds, I fancy, for fear of being intrusive. 'Is it a memorial window?' I asked. 'Yes,' she said, simply. 'Of your mistress, Miss Turner?' I further inquired, flattering myself I was getting to the truth. 'No,' she said, 'I don't think — No, I would not put up that sort of memorial for her.' 'And would you like no name or initial introduced into the plan?' I asked ; for she had made every preparation, and had brought the drawings with her. 'No, thank you, sir,' she said."

That evening Aunt Rachel asked to be taken to see the Home of Rest. She chatted with the old people and exhorted the little servants. But when she was introduced to the matron she drew her aside and took her quiet face between her trembling old hands.

"And so you put up that pretty window at St. Mitre's," she said. The matron's pale face flushed. "It is such a window as I should have liked to put up for somebody I loved," Aunt Rachel went on; "but I am old, and my means are scanty, and I could not do it. Thank you for doing it for me. It will stand for two as well as for one. What love does for love anywhere speaks for love everywhere. God bless you."

The matron's face flushed deeper. She trembled a little. When the old lady was gone she went down-stairs and looked in the visitors' book. She found there the name of Miss Rachel Blacklaw.

She did not know that name; she knew nothing of Mr. Duncan's aunt. Yet somehow she felt she would have liked to tell that old lady to whose memory she had dedicated that window. Only she always felt it had been great presumption in her to do it!



UNDER THE ROSE:

A Song.

THERE'S a secret that hides in the heart of a rose,
And a story that lurks in the song of a bird,
And the secret's the dearest a heart can enfold,
The story's the sweetest that ever was heard.
But hey! for the rose that blooms close in the briar,
And hey! for the bird that sings deep in the dell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the beauty and break all the spell!

THERE'S a glance in a crowd, that means little—or much;
There's a clasp of a hand—does the world feel it too?
All your own is the look, all your own is the touch,
And the world that jogs past is no matter to you!
Then it's hey! for the eyes that a sudden flash fire,
And hey! for the meaning that warm fingers tell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the sweetness and break all the spell!

THERE'S a word in your ear—do you catch it aright?
There's a kiss on your lips, as the twilight drops down;
And the word thro' all time makes a pathway of light,
And your heart has a vow, and your life has a crown.
So it's hey! for love's hand on the strings of the lyre,
And hey! for the lips that can kiss and not tell:
If we look, if we watch, if we peep and enquire,
We may miss all the sweetness and break all the spell!

A WREATH ON THE GRAVE OF THE LATE ANNA JAMESON.

LIVING abroad and far away from the tumult and turmoil of London, it was only lately that I stumbled on the life of the late Anna Jameson, by her niece, Gerardine Macpherson.

It is always hard for a relative, especially one so near and dear to the subject as the author of this work, in writing a biography, to do that amount of justice which is due, and which she would so much desire to render. There must ever be a nervous shrinking from every stroke of the pen which tends to lay bare before the public those thousand and one traits of intimate feeling which give colour and motive to actions, and without the knowledge of which it is impossible for a stranger to judge the life of any one.

Besides which, to praise one's own dear one, even though she be gone, is all too much like praising oneself. Thus the proposed biography runs the risk of becoming a mere narrative of dry facts, like the water marks on some steep cliff, which serve to show where the waves had fallen and risen, and nothing more.

But with all these difficulties to contend with, Gerardine Macpherson has managed to give to her narrative all the charm and interest of a living picture. As I read the book, visions of the past rose up again and again, passing and repassing ever more vividly before my view, till it occurred to me that I might perhaps be allowed to gather up the sweet memories evoked, and twine with them a wreath to lay on the grave of one who was, in her lifetime, the centre of so much love, so much admiration and respect, as Anna Jameson.

The public pronounced her a woman of rare parts and accomplishments, a lady of exquisite taste, with a thorough knowledge of all that concerns art, and a perfect intelligence of the conception and beauties of the old masters.

But those who knew her intimately prized her for something more. We knew her for a woman perfect in her generation: a woman working, and giving the example of working, as God intended a woman should work—not from any worldly motive, but always for the welfare and happiness of others.

From her earliest childhood, the little Anna showed signs of precocious talent; and her father thought it often necessary to repress the exuberance of that uprising spirit, for ever taking the lead of her companions; a tendency not infrequent with children conscious of unusual powers. But, repressed as she might be, the little Anna's heart was full of sympathy for her parents, whose disappointments

and struggles sank deep into her heart, for she had witnessed and understood. It became the all-absorbing aim of her life to assist them.

The little genius thrived in mind and intelligence; and in conformity with the high aim she had set before her, and of which she never lost sight for a moment—that of helping her parents—the heroic child went forth to earn her bread at the early age of sixteen. That all through her life she proved a good, affectionate, helpful daughter is now taken into account in Heaven's courts above. And here below, too, her filial piety still shines about her name like an aureole of radiant evidence, at once the apology for and eternal reward of her energy and goodness.

Of her marriage, which took place a few years afterwards, Gerardine Macpherson could scarcely speak with much frankness. The subject was too delicate and too intimate to venture on explanations, which, perhaps, Mrs. Jameson in her lifetime had been generously anxious to conceal. But I, who am wholly unconnected with the family, and am committing no breach of confidence if I broach the subject, may be forgiven if, in justice to my dear lost friend, I repeat here what I have heard from one who knew her in her married life, and who often assured me that the incompatibility of temper so often spoken of, and so incomprehensible in the case of so loving a woman and appreciative a man, was in fact a matter of a very different character from what was generally supposed.

Mr. Jameson, himself a man of considerable taste and talent, was narrow-minded enough to be jealous of his wife's superior accomplishments. Her presence was a continual cause of gnawing envy—a grievance he could not forgive; for she commanded that attention and adulation from others which he considered due to himself alone. He took her superiority as a standing reproach to himself; and in his desire to make her mind subservient and subordinate to his own, he cruelly pushed her behind him and repressed the warm affection she offered, with a coldness, a neglect, a tyranny, which, to a loving nature like hers, was insupportable.

Mr. Jameson was not a solitary example of the mistake men make who marry women who are by nature more highly gifted than themselves. These husbands cannot understand that a woman's mind is differently constituted from that of men; and that let the wife be ever so much more brilliantly intellectual than he, still she is, and ever must be, inferior to him in that muscular judgment which comes of stronger faculties and a greater knowledge of the world; an advantage beyond all value in his domestic relations, and which must place in his hands the sceptre of mastership and dominion, if only he have sense enough to see it, generosity of soul to admit it, and reason to thoroughly understand it.

The term of Mrs. Jameson's married home life was short. She soon returned to the parental roof, and from thenceforth devoted her

whole life and efforts to supporting her parents and rendering their declining years easy and comfortable.

I never saw Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Jameson's father. He was dead some time before I joined the family circle at Ealing: which happened shortly after Mrs. Jameson's return from Rome with her niece, Gerardine. But the mother, Mrs. Murphy, was there, occupying the arm-chair by the hearth; the sweetest picture of an old lady I ever saw.

She used to sit mostly in the little parlour down-stairs, wearing her widow's cap so becomingly to the sweet brown eyes, and a complexion fresh as a girl in her teens. There used to be a picture of her, taken in her youth, while she was still a newly-married bride, painted by Collins, the Royal Academician; and apart from the interest which must attach to the subject, it was a really good picture. It used to hang in the little sitting-room, a large sized canvas, representing a sweet, graceful girl, with a scarf twisted fantastically round her head; looking out from the dark foreground with the softest hazel eyes; the same that in her old age had lost nothing of their dovelike expression, but rather matured into a motherly look, which seemed ever to invite the young to come to her for protection and caress.

Then there was the eldest daughter, who held the keys of housewifery, and who was always doing something for some one and every one; talking now to one and then to another, with her kind, consoling voice. And there was the youngest born, Charlotte, called after the Queen Consort of George the Third; because, as I always understood, she was born at Windsor: and all beaming on their friends and visitors such warm benevolence and hearty welcome, that even now, after the lapse of so many years, the memory comes back to me with all the cheering influence of the days of their action. It is something to have lived for, to remember those faces!

These were the members of the household circle. But there were two or three more who came and went to the nest, as they called it, but who had their own homes beside. One of them, Camilla, Mrs. Sherwin, bore in her whole person and manner that peculiar grace of refinement and sensibility which often stamps the children of artists. This lady is now the venerable aunt Mrs. Macpherson speaks of as the only surviving sister of Mrs. Jameson.

Another sister again was Louisa, Mrs. Bate, mother of Gerardine Macpherson. She lived in the cottage next door; and sometimes visited the nest to complete the picture of such a family as it is seldom given to see. Mrs. Bate must have been very beautiful when young; for, even then, I could scarcely take my eyes off her face when she came in, so sweet and serene was her countenance, even though her figure and contour had already lost their symmetry.

Then there was Gerardine herself, too, flitting in and out continually, and ever coming like a sunbeam into the room, so merry, humorous, and witty her young talk. She was only eighteen, indeed

little more than a child ; and in the exceeding exuberance of her spirits would sometimes forget to complete the task her aunt had set her : perhaps that of copying some drawing for the printer who was waiting to take it away. A look from that aunt, full of portentous reproach, would bring the tears into the delinquent's eyes ; but never a word in rebellious reply, never a sign of ill-temper or resentment. Poor Gerardine !

Ah, those genial hours ! where are they gone ? The hours when we would sit in the evening twilight, gathering about Mrs. Murphy's feet to listen to her tales of by-gone times, long ago in the last century.

I think I see her now, looking at us with her sweet smile as she described the fashions of those days—when the two-pronged steel forks first came into use, though the knife was still used, polite people presenting the back, vulgar people the blade, to the lips—and a hundred little anecdotes besides, all illustrative of the customs and manners of our grandmothers.

One evening, when she was more than usually communicative, she chanced to mention her mother, who, she told us, had died when she was a little girl, and absent at school. Upon which she narrated a circumstance which made such an impression on my mind, not only for its strangeness, but for the earnest conviction of the narrator herself, that I never forgot a word of it ; and therefore make no apology for reproducing it as it was told to me. It was a ghost story.

Mrs. Murphy, mother of Anna Jameson, was an Englishwoman, as Mrs. Macpherson related. Her parents lived at St. Albans, in easy circumstances, and sent their little girl, at an early age, to Dublin for education. The step seems to us a strange one nowadays, when not only London, but every provincial town in the kingdom, is known to teem with schools and all sorts of educational opportunities for the young. But in those earlier days it was different ; and the best means for acquiring accomplishments was at an establishment in Dublin, conducted by an Irish lady married to a Frenchman. I think the name was Dumoulin, but the school has long since disappeared. It was a long way to send a child, but there were many pupils who came from a still greater distance—America, the West Indies, East Indies, &c. : and when we reflect that there was neither steamboat nor railway to shorten the transit, we may consider the store set by receiving an education at a pretty high figure. But sending children, even under such difficulties as then existed, was better than sending girls to the Continent, at that time in full revolution ; and Madame Dumoulin had a world-wide reputation for giving all the advantages of foreign languages and foreign accomplishments, with the more solid and sober education so much coveted by English parents for their daughters.

Our little girl from St. Albans was then about ten or eleven, as

clearly as I can remember: certainly not more. The holidays had come, and all the pupils gone: all save our little English maiden, who seemed to have been forgotten. The lady of the establishment thought it strange, the child thought it cruel, and wept many a tear in secret; but few words on the subject were spoken between them. They waited.

In these days the voyage from Holyhead to Dublin is performed in from three to six hours, rarely more. But in the days of which I speak travellers had to trust to sailing vessels only, which would sometimes take ten days to reach the port, even in fair weather. Besides this, there was the land travelling to be considered, and St. Albans was a good way from the sea. Journeying on land was, as compared with our modern conveniences, a huge undertaking. It used to be performed in coaches, which had the knack of overturning now and then, not at all infrequently. Sometimes the horses getting lame, sometimes a wheel breaking down, and other misadventures would force the passengers to get out and remain there for days together.

Taking all which chances into consideration, there was no especial alarm created by the delay. News and tidings of loved ones did not then flash along the globe-encircling telegraph wires as they do now; and letters not only took a long time to reach their destination, but were a costly luxury to the recipient, who had to pay ninepence all over England, and fifteenpence a letter to and from Ireland. Those were the days when letter correspondents were lucky who had a friend in Parliament to frank their epistles—but franking, though it saved expense, could not annihilate time. So they had to wait, and still waited for tidings which did not come.

One night the child woke suddenly to see the room full of light. The curtains of her little bed were drawn aside, and she saw her mother stoop over to look at her; then meeting the eyes wide awake with wonder and surprise, the mother smiled very lovingly and withdrew. The curtains fell together, and the light went out.

It all happened so quickly, so unexpectedly, so like a flash of lightning (said the old lady as she narrated), that she had not time to make a movement, even towards throwing her arms about her mother's neck, when the vision had fled and the room was dark and empty.

With a happy sense of the mother's arrival, come all the way from St. Albans to fetch her, the little girl soon closed her eyes and slept the happy sleep of childhood. But no sooner did the dawn appear than she awoke, dressed herself, and hurried to the breakfast-room before anyone was up, and there waited. She saw the maid come in to lay the cloth, and bring in the tea-urn; and to this maid, with lively clapping of little hands and leaping of little feet, she told the joyful tidings of her mother's arrival. She tried hard to coax the maid to take her to her mother's room, but the discreet Abigail declined. She laughed at the child and ran away.

In due time came Madame Dumoulin herself, and the English girl danced up the room to meet her, asking leave to go and see her mother. The poor lady heard the child's pleadings with alarm; she thought she must have fever. She felt her pulse, she stroked her forehead, looked at her tongue, and gravely spoke of sending for the doctor. But detecting nothing in the examination that could warrant any feeling of anxiety, she assured the child it was only a dream; that neither mother nor letter had as yet appeared, and that they must still wait until something turned up. So again they all waited and watched impatiently.

At last a letter did come. A letter with a black seal, announcing the death of the mother on the very night she had appeared through the curtains bending over her sleeping child.

My readers will ask, did I really believe this ghost story? Certainly I did. I believed Mrs. Murphy implicitly. She was too deeply in earnest, and too secure in her own conviction, to admit the slightest doubt of what she said. And as to self-deception, illusions, dreams, &c., can all the scientific explanations which Faraday and Brewster have left us teach one true lesson as to where matter ends and spirit begins? Bishop Berkeley tells us that all things and everything in creation is but idea. In that case, matter is only matter when it comes into contact with our senses, and the ghost was a fact.

I was surprised to miss that incident in Mrs. Macpherson's book; for that she believed it as truly as I did, I know. It was she who asked Mrs. Murphy to tell it one evening as we sat at her feet listening.

I considered Gerardine as a girl of great and promising talent. She showed a decided aptitude for art; and was, as I before hinted, of great use to her aunt in copying prints, tracing diagrams, and drawing on wood for the Sacred and Legendary Art then in progress. Gerardine was draughtswoman, and the writer of this had the honour of helping as occasional amanuensis and translator when time pressed. Gerardine had an especial talent for illustrating any conceit that crossed her mind, quite wonderful to me, who lacked it completely.

One day she brought in a half sheet of note paper, covered over with figures in various and expressive attitudes of conversation round a long table, at the head of which sat the unmistakable author of the "*Divina Commedia*." She called it "*La Societa di Dante*."

I know Mrs. Jameson thought it good by the bright approving smile with which she looked at it, but she said nothing till by-and-by, when we were alone and I made some admiring remark, Miss Jameson answered: "If she would only work—if she would only keep steady to it! But she does not."

Another time she brought in a new conceit, this time set in verse, which I transcribe here. Not for its especial value as a rhythmic production, perhaps, but to show that Gerardine, though only eighteen,

already gave tokens of ability in lyric composition; which, alas! in the absorbing cares of a young family, and latterly in the sore need of bread winning, was suffered to die out for want of use. Poor Gerardine!

Here are the verses as she wrote them out in my book, and which I have preserved for so many, many years:—

THE RED ROSE: THE CAUSE THEREOF.

At first the rose which grew in lady's bower
Was white as snow,
And every morn a maiden culled a flower
To deck her brow.
One day, while stooping low to choose her treasure,
There came her lover:
He kissed the white neck arching in its measure,
It crimsoned over.
But, as the lady rose to chide that lover,
The flush it faded;
Passed into the rose, which, ever from that hour,
With blush is shaded.

How little did I dream, when at my particular request she wrote out those lines in my book, that I should be publishing them to the world so many years after, and when she was dead!

We both married from Mrs. Jameson's house, though not at the same time. She went her way, I went mine; and so we never met or corresponded. Not that I thought less of Gerardine or that she thought less of me; but a heavy curtain had fallen between us, and our lives became effectually separated from that time. I now return to Mrs. Jameson, the main subject of these pages.

She used to persist in sitting upstairs writing until three or four o'clock in the morning—a habit which must have materially weakened the vital energy, and rendered it powerless when the time came for doing battle with invading disease. She tried her eyes too much, as her mother and sisters would often warn her; but she, as often, would reply that she worked best when no sound was in the house, not a footfall to interrupt her thoughts; and she assured her anxious dear ones that she never felt the worse for it.

I have introduced this remark not wholly without design. I wished to show in some degree how earnestly and unsparingly that dear lady strove to win for her family some certain means of existence when she was gone. But even then she could not always conceal that her eyes began to fail her; and although she had a lamp made especially to serve her night work—a lamp consisting of two low sockets, with supports for green shades over short sperm candles—still there were times when she could hardly see.

But her courage never failed her, nor did her large, motherly heart deny the claims of sister women all round. Thus, though at one time she was pressed hard with family cares and responsibilities, and though she possessed no competent income to serve, she nevertheless

managed to lend a helping, generous hand to the needy. She would intuitively guess the hour of necessity, and devise some delicate pretext for inclosing a five-pound note, with that feeling and thoughtfulness which formed the characteristic of all her actions. She possessed a considerable amount of influence in society, and she never omitted an opportunity of using it to help and encourage a struggling talent. She it was who first started the idea of the *English-woman's Journal*, with a view to open new avenues for woman's work. She said to me one day, in speaking of it: "There are 800,000 women over and above the number of men in the country; and how are they all to find husbands, or find work and honest maintenance? The market for governesses is glutted."

She had gathered around her quite a little coterie of aspiring young souls, whom she called her adopted nieces, and whose various talents, in whatever way they gave token, she nurtured with counsel and assistance; and she would often send us, her little troupe, for a holiday excursion at her own expense, while she herself remained at home working. I, among the rest, have to thank her for one of the pleasantest and most interesting days I ever spent. It was at Sion House.

In all my varied experience, at home and abroad, I never came across one so free from jealousy, so utterly void of envy or vanity in whatever shape, or any of the small vices which afflict our sex. She had none. Her soul was as large, as noble, as sympathetic as her heart. She loved her German friends, as it was natural she should love them: they made much of her, they gave her sympathy and affection, which her nature demanded, for she was a thorough woman. She loved her English friends, who as surely, and in as great measure, loved her in return. And there is not one living soul among all those who knew her, who will not warmly echo these poor, faint memories of that richly gifted creature.

I was delighted to recognise, in the frontispiece of Mrs. Macpherson's book, the little sketch I had so often admired in Charlotte Murphy's hand, in those by-gone days of youth and hope—alas, slipped away for ever! It had been taken by her father, one morning when he caught sight of his girl looking up wistfully at his well-filled bookshelves. Seeing it again was like bringing back a flash of one's youth.

Mrs. Jameson, as I knew her, was no longer slim. She had already gained those proportions and that portliness of contour which, with many, gives the stamp of middle age. She had a beautiful hand, and a beautiful neck and shoulders. Her features, as shown in the frontispiece, were hers still. The expression of her eyes are there true to the life, as I knew her; and the firm but delicate mouth also. These were very characteristic.

But what distinguished Mrs. Jameson above every one I ever knew was one especial charm which no picture could ever give or perpetuate.

It was her voice. Gentle, low, and sweet like Cordelia's, whose beautiful spirit lived again in her, it was even something more; it was musical. It swept the air like the notes of an *Æolian* harp, whose dying tones still lingered on the ear. And when I add that her choice of words in speaking was so singularly elegant and graceful that English on her lips was sweet as the Italian, it will excite little surprise that, whenever she spoke, every word was hushed in the circle in which she stood, and every ear was bent to listen.

Even the style of her caligraphy bears the stamp of elegance in the smooth, sweeping lines of its character; as, indeed, everything she touched and worked at.

I feel it wisest now to draw my notice to a close, lest I say too much; and I beg in these few words to fasten up my wreath of sweet memories to lay softly on the grave of one who lived the centre subject of so much love, so much honour, so much respect and admiration.

As for me, my best claim to be heard consists in this: that I was able to understand and appreciate her who was not only one of the most accomplished women of her day, but the most unselfish and lovable among God's chosen ones; and certainly was in the rank of those who are justly named the celebrities of the Empire.



GRATITUDE.

(After the Persian.)

I.

YOUNG love has red, red flowers,
With never a ripening fruit;
Fame has a mounting fire,
That suddenly falls and dies;
Pleasure has singing hours,
But soon the music is mute;
Hope, the child of desire,
Ever evades and flies.

II.

Only where gratitude grows
In the earth, like a desert palm,
Odours and spices rain,
And men are fain to rest.
As the sunbeams smite the snows,
So yield our hearts to its balm:
And he that wins the gain,
And he that gives, is blest!

G. B. STUART.

MOLLY : A SKETCH IN THREE TONES.

WHEN first I entered the room it seemed to me that I was confronted by a thick veil of darkness ; but when my pupils, contracted by the fierce glare of the July sun outside, had become accustomed to the sudden change, I perceived that a subdued light, proceeding from three carefully-curtained windows, dimly illuminated the apartment. I advanced cautiously, threading my way amongst the quaint and oddly-disposed furniture, until I slipped into the little nook where her ladyship reclined on a soft luxurious divan. She was almost walled up between a huge black cabinet, and some curiously carved shelves filled with saucers of antique china, each of which stood with one side against the wall, so as to form a little square chamber within the large drawing-room. This corner was just big enough to contain the divan, a small low ottoman, and a tiny table, on which lay a buttercup with a long stalk, by the side of a slender vase in which had been placed a spray of white currants, the stem and leaves straggling high in the air, whilst three or four bunches of the transparent fruit hung over the edge of the glass.

Lady de Burgh was lying back amongst deep red cushions, with listless hands clasped round her knees, and contemplating the vase of currants with the rapture of one who has discovered a profound secret. She was a woman whose age it was difficult to guess, and whose height and figure could not be divined from the obscurity of the room, the nature of her apparel, and her lounging attitude. She was very pale, and her features, though hardly beautiful, were refined. She wore no ornaments, not even on her long white fingers, save her wedding-ring—and on her head her sole adornment was her soft dark-brown hair, which seemed to cling simply about her in short dainty waves, without either plait or parting. She was arrayed in a pale green dress, with a good deal of old and very yellow lace about it ; it sat loosely round her neck and wrists, and though her elbows and knees were sharply defined, her waist remained unmarked behind the straight and single fold of her silken garb.

It must not be supposed that I took in all these facts at a glance. I observed them gradually as I sat by Lady de Burgh's side on the divan, whither she motioned me.

"I am very glad to see you," she said, in a low, melancholy voice. "I believe I have not seen you since the day of my marriage, and you were such a rough boy then !"

"I hope I am not a rough man," I said, trying to moderate my voice. "I was only fifteen then, and it is twenty years ago. You went abroad, and before you came back, I had gone to India."

"Ah! you must have found India very trying," she remarked. "But life is a dreary affair to all—always desire and never fruition."

"But surely you have no cause to complain," I ventured to remonstrate. "Sir John is rich and successful, and I understand you have a charming daughter."

She shivered slightly. "My daughter is a shepherdess," she said, "a mere shepherdess. I do my best for her, but she is a mere shepherdess. She is entirely her father's child, like him negatively and affirmatively. Would you believe it?—she even ridicules my currants! She says fruit ripens to be eaten! *Eaten!* I can hardly support the idea. Had I had a son, he would have understood me, sympathized with me, intuitively deciphered me."

"But I hear that Miss de Burgh is infinitely lovely," I said.

"No doubt," said Lady de Burgh, "no doubt the soulless beings you have met in town think so. Numbers of soulless men and women come here, and think her perfect. And so she is, in her way, but she is a mere shepherdess, as I said before. She cannot satisfy me. But I seek no joy from those of my own hearth: I look for it but in this calm seclusion, and occasionally in the intercourse of a select few who can appreciate." And she took up the buttercup, leaned back among her pillows, and fondled the flower against her lip and cheek.

"I shall be curious to see your shepherdess," said I. "She seems well known, notwithstanding that she lives in this retired place. But I have sought her in vain in London crowds ——"

"You have sought her?"

"Yes, I wanted to know what my old friend's little girl was like, and when I found the President of the Royal Academy, and the Prime Minister, and the Poet-Laureate, speaking of her with enthusiasm, I thought I would seek her too. They, at least, must be some judges of beauty, of manners, and of mind."

"I do not agree. There is very little art at the Academy," said Lady de Burgh, slowly. "The essence of true art is failure—failure, because it dares to grope upon the hidden shores of the unknown and the invisible. The imitative art which treats of life, and of what is visible and tangible and provable, is mere copying, and it is this copying which you find at the Academy. What I have said applies equally to the Poet-Laureate's verse, which is indeed thoughtful at times, but does not pretend to fathom infinity, or to explain the secrets of nature."

I stared. Was Lady de Burgh mad?

"But the Prime Minister?" I gasped, thinking that here, at least, was practical ground.

"The Premier," she replied, "is, I believe, an honest man, but like all statesmen, he is utterly commonplace, and quite oblivious of the grand destinies of the human race. Like all politicians he sees only with the naked eye. He does his best, I verily believe, but he is stupid, and entirely ignorant of the aims of humanity, and the needs for which it is yearning."

She relapsed, with her buttercup, into her red cushions, and I sat stupified and speechless. A faint odour seemed to pervade the room, and no sound broke the stillness. Was I in an enchanted palace?

"There is no sovereign," began Lady de Burgh again, but in so weak a tone that it seemed as if she were speaking to herself; "there is no sovereign but the inner consciousness; there is no parliament but the inter-communion of earnest friends; there is no law but the law of art; there is no art but the expression of the intense longings of humanity."

I tried to speak—I tried to move—but I was petrified, spell-bound.

Suddenly the door opened, and a flood of light rushed in. In the warm radiance stood a girl of nineteen, whose symmetry of form and beauty of feature were, or struck my excited imagination as being, faultless. She was dressed in white, with something blue round her slender waist, and a blue fillet in her hair. It was as if Aphrodite had come to gladden the earth.

"Come hither, Molly," said Lady de Burgh, raising her voice a little. "Come, and let me introduce an old friend of mine to you."

This then was the shepherdess, this tall maiden with the regal grace, and the wonderful loveliness! She closed the door, but her presence seemed to keep the sunshine in the room. I stood up, but did not venture to meet her through the maze of chairs and tables and china pots which strewed the floor, but she was presently with us, and our introduction effected, she seated herself on the ottoman, and looked kindly at me.

"I have heard of you," she said. "It is good of you to come and see us, for you are a great Indian statesman now, are you not?" She smiled sweetly, and spoke brightly.

"Dear Molly," murmured her mother, "you have no flower! How often have I told you always to carry a flower in your hand! And you have forgotten your crook! My darling, you are so thoughtless."

"I am so sorry, mamma," said Molly, with a cheerfully penitent air. "I did carry three daisies about all the morning, but they were quite dead at luncheon-time, so I threw them away, and my crook I have mislaid somewhere, but I shall find it again. Do you know," she added, turning to me, "I am as bad as little Bo-peep, for she only lost her sheep, whereas I, who have no sheep to lose, am always losing my crook!"

"Such spirits! Such gaiety!" whispered Lady de Burgh. "Such a colour! Such health and strength! So painful to a mother!"

The colour, which was a delicate peach-bloom, heightened slightly at Lady de Burgh's words. But Molly was serenely good-humoured.

"When I am twenty-five," she said, demurely, "I mean to enter a nunnery. Not the usual kind, but mamma's cloistered cool retreat here. I daresay by that time I shall be tired of riding and walking."

"You won't be able to sit here always, Molly," said her mother, plaintively. "I shall be very glad to have you in the afternoons, but someone must order the dinner, and write notes, in the mornings."

"Of course I shall do all that just as usual. I like it," said the young housekeeper. "Shall we have some tea now, mamma dear? and then we might go out."

She pulled a thick gold cord as she spoke, and it must have rung a bell a long way off, for though I heard nothing, the result almost immediately appeared in the shape of a liliputian boy in silk stockings and a satin suit, carrying a small ebony tray, containing three diminutive cups of very strong tea, a silver cream-jug and sugar-basin of exquisite workmanship, and two little platters, on one of which lay some thin slices of bread and honey, and on the other a few bunches of red, white, and black currants. A large yellow gooseberry, a piece of groundsel, and a spray of jessamine, seemed to have fallen accidentally upon the plate, after the fruit was arranged.

"Ah! my sweet nymph!" cried Lady de Burgh, clasping her hands in an ecstasy of delight: and then she took the little plate of fruit on her knee, and gazed at it abstractedly for some seconds before offering it to me, with a sigh. But I helped myself ruthlessly. I felt that Molly had picked the currants, and manœuvred their artistic simplicity, and the fruit tasted delicious because she had fingered it.

"I think you must go out now, Molly," said Lady de Burgh, in a more subdued tone than ever. "This excitement has quite overpowered me, and my brain throbs."

"Would not a little fresh air do you good?" I suggested, marveling what the excitement had been.

Lady de Burgh smiled faintly.

"No," she replied, "solitude is my best physician—solitude, and my own grand thoughts."

"Dear mamma!" ejaculated Molly, kissing her mother's pale brow very, very gently. "I am afraid that talking so much has tired you. You must rest a little, and I will bring you some flowers, and you must come out by-and-by, when the sun is low."

"When the dew has risen," murmured Lady de Burgh. "Thank you, my flower-bud."

We crept away in silence. At the door I turned, and looked again into Lady de Burgh's corner. She was absorbed. She was caressing the sprig of groundsel against her cheek.

Out of doors in the sunshine with Molly, I felt a different being. The weird feeling which had oppressed me in the drawing-room fell away, and I was a young man again. I talked, and Molly talked. I was very happy, and I hope she was too. She kept picking curious leaves as we went along, though without interrupting the conversation, until at last, as we stopped beside an iron fence, which separated the garden from a meadow, she stopped, put her hand through the bars, and gathered two dandelions.

"You must put one of these in your coat," she said. "It will please mamma when you go to say good-bye to her."

I put it in my button-hole immediately. I would have put a radish there, or a cucumber, to please Molly. She held the other in her own hand, and surveyed it rather comically.

"Mamma is so fond of these sort of things," she said. "I am afraid I am not a good daughter, but it is so difficult for me to care for what mamma calls real art."

"And what do *you* call real art?" I inquired.

"I don't know," she replied, "but I like papa's art best. If you ever come to see us again I will show you the picture-room, where papa has some beautiful Vandycks and Reynolds, and a Titian, and a Rembrandt; and the library, where he has some rare editions of Shakespeare, and other books. Do you know papa?"

"I have never seen him since his wedding-day, when everyone was saying how delightful it was to witness the union of two artist souls."

"Did they say that?" said Molly. "I did not know mamma ever thought papa artistic. She says he cannot rise above Shakespeare, and she says Shakespeare is false art. But perhaps papa and I shall grow to her ideal some day. She says it might burst upon us quite suddenly. What do you think?"

"Heaven forefend!" I could not refrain from saying, fervently. "Why in that case Sir John would burn his fine books and pictures."

"Then you don't think I shall ever be like mamma?" said Molly, rather dejectedly.

I shook my head.

"Well! I am a little glad," said she, more brightly, "for I feel as if I should never really care to sit in a dark room and contemplate. And yet I can't help being just a little bit sorry, for mamma says mine is not the highest life."

I longed to tell her she was perfect, but I forbore.

"But you lead a very useful life," I said, guardedly. "You are your father's companion and help."

"Oh! but that is pleasure," she cried. "I like riding with papa, and doing things for him, and trying to make him happy. Mamma says there is no good in any life which does not yearn over humanity. Now, I don't yearn ——"

"No," I interrupted, half amused. "You do much better. You make every item of humanity happy which comes near you."

"That is nothing," she replied. "People are so kind in seeming to like to talk to me. But, do you know, I think I am beginning to improve, for I never entertained one of mamma's guests before, and you are one of her guests. But you are not like her other friends at all, for they always say *hush* when I speak, and they recite such queer poems, and talk so strangely, or else sit silent for hours, and then they call me a shepherdess!"

"I wish you would come and mind my sheep!" I exclaimed.

"Have you sheep?" she asked, simply.

"Only figuratively," I replied. "I will tell you what I mean another day. Now I must go and say good-bye to your mother."

We went back to the house, and Molly plucked a half-dead rose on our way, and placed it in the centre of her bunch of withered leaves. But at the drawing-room door she transferred this strange bouquet from her hand to mine.

"Mamma could not bear two voices again," she said. "Please give these to her."

A chill came over me as I re-entered the gloomy apartment, but this time I made my way more easily to Lady de Burgh's side. She still held the groundsel in her hand, and laid it tenderly on her knee as she received Molly's little bouquet, and turned it round.

"Dear pretty rustic!" she said, sadly. "She has no originality, no innate appreciation, no immense purposes, but she is obedient. She has no agonising passions, but she is fond."

"She is a goddess," I said, warmly.

Lady de Burgh looked at me in mournful surprise.

"Goddesses," she observed, "were merely terrestrial creatures, deified by a vulgar admiration for strength or beauty. They had no soul, I do not speak of the common soul which animates us all, but of that vast spring of appreciation, that pure grasp of the intangible, that intuitive perception of profundity, that ecstatic soul which is possessed by the very few."

Then she noticed the dandelion in my button-hole, and, emerging from her cushions, she touched it with the tips of her fingers.

"You are very artistic," she said. "I can see it at a glance. We must be great friends. But I must not keep you longer now, for I have much to occupy my mind before I sleep to-night."

So I left her, with her dead rose, and her groundsel, and her grand thoughts. But Molly was in the hall, with her happy genial manner, and when I had said good-bye to her, and departed, my last impression of that house was one of joy and serenity.

The railway station and the hotly-cushioned train seemed very prosaic after my interview with Molly. But, as I was whirled back to London, the beautiful truth entered, with conviction, into my mind, that the practical conveniences of life were the vehicles of romance. How often might not this commonplace train carry me again and again to the side of her whom I already regarded as my divinity! And, though, when it all came about, the mother called me a clown, and the father a thief, for daring to woo their daughter, what cared I when I had won that peerless maid to be the shepherdess of my figurative sheep in good earnest?

DOWN A SALT MINE.

HOMER had sung the praises of salt long before Plato made a speech in honour of its virtue; the Romans compared the utility of salt even to that of the sun; in every language, whether ancient or modern, we meet with proverbs testifying to the importance of this wonderful mineral. In all known times and in all known places (with the fewest possible exceptions) salt has been duly appreciated.

There was a time when the Wieliczka salt mine—the greatest salt mine in the world—was of great repute as one of the grandest sights of the country. Wieliczka, however, does not lie on the beaten track of the regular tourist, and therefore is less spoken of now than it used to be. People in these days seldom take the trouble of going out of their way for the sake of anything worth seeing.

Nevertheless, Wieliczka is not without its visitors; a good many people still go to see the works in the course of the year. Few travellers will pass by the spot without halting to see the mine; and besides these chance guests and stray foreign visitors, a number of invalids resort to the place for the sake of its salt springs, sulphur and malt baths.

The small town of Wieliczka in the Podgorze district (“Podgorze” means below the hills) in Galizia—not Spanish *Galicia*, but Galizia, that part of Poland which belongs to Austria—is situated in a pleasant valley, open to the north, and surrounded by lovely hills to the south, which enclose the place in a semicircle. Part of the houses—mostly of wooden architecture—stand in the hollow, others on terraces ascending the gentle hills.

Looking from some eminence over the pastoral neighbourhood, we can, without a great stretch of imagination, go back a few centuries, and, blotting the small town out of the picture, fancy that we see nothing but the vast and lonely extent of pasture ground; lonely but for the white dots, representing shepherds and their flocks, which here and there break the monotony of the aspect.

To-day, entering the town, we notice that it is a quiet, cleanly-looking, nice little place, with a large market-square, an old castle in its centre, and a certain air of contentment about it. The inhabitants are good-looking, well-conducted, polite people, speaking the soft, rather drawling Mazur dialect of the elegant Polish tongue.

Very far from the unhealthy, squalid, pinched, melancholy figures you are wont to meet in other mining districts, the Wieliczka miners exhibit perfect ease and contentment in their handsome features, in the whole bearing of their well-proportioned limbs. They are

passionately fond of their mine, and proud of it in proportion ; they can understand life in and for their mine only. They have good public schools for their boys and girls, and other popular institutions, some of which you would scarcely expect to find in an insignificant place of seven or eight thousand inhabitants. Then there are the baths already mentioned, which are of some repute in the neighbourhood.

Having pointed out the insignificance of the town above ground,



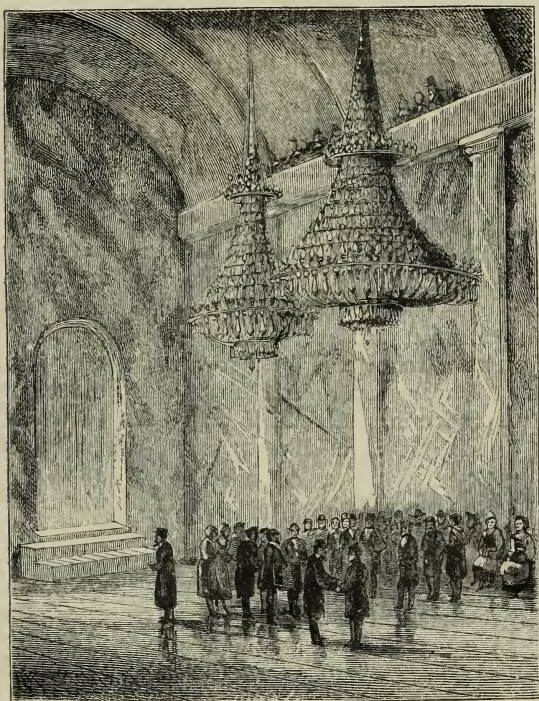
IN THE SALT MINE.

let us at once introduce you to the far more extensive subterranean city of Wieliczka, taking you down by one of the two chief entrances to the mine. Whether we descend the four hundred and seventy steps of the spiral staircase, the "Franciszek," constructed in the year 1744, during the reign of August, Elector of Saxony, or whether we are conveyed down by means of ropes at the "Danielowicz," the second entrance, we land at a convenient point for our expedition.

We cannot take you over the whole of the salt city. It is a labyrinth of lanes, streets, squares, passages, caves, bridges suspended across precipices, steps leading into black gulfs or up crystal mounds, ferries over sheets of water, and so on. Some one has made

the precise calculation that a walk from Cracow to Vienna would last as long and be more easily accomplished than passing through all the corridors and chambers of the mine of Wieliczka. We must, therefore, limit our examination to the chief points of interest in this strange land.

While walking or driving down, we are informed that the ground into which we penetrate is of manifold composition. The salt is found unmixed with earth, pure, clear, and hard, in immense rock-like



THE BALL ROOM.

masses. It is worked with the miner's hammer or axe, like any other hard mineral ; sometimes, but rarely, it is blasted with powder. Large blocks of salt are separated from the salt-rock, divided into smaller ones of perfectly square shape—the salt crystallises in cubic form, and the immense formless rocks are easily cleft into cubes—and conveyed to the upper world, looking either exactly like frozen water, or with a slight greyish green hue in the colour.

Through the long and lofty western gallery we pass into one of the largest caves of the place—the Chamber of St. Ursula. We look with astonishment at the walls, supporters, lofty vaulted roof of what at first sight we can only take for rock-crystal, all shining and glitter-

ing with the reflection of the light of many torches, and we begin to experience that sort of dreamy sensation which would undoubtedly accompany us in an expedition through fairyland. We feel as if we were standing upon the threshold of the mysterious kingdom of mountain-goblins, an impression which is increased on our beholding a shining crenelled wall, looking like the wall of an old fortress, with an archway in the middle invitingly opened to admit us. A bridge, loftily reposing upon the bold arch, leads to some higher region, but we are bound downwards, and accordingly we pass through the archway, down a hundred and twenty salt steps, and straight into the largest room, the *salle de fête* or ball-room of the mine—the Michalowicz Chamber.

It is lit up for our special benefit by numberless wax lights in lustre chandeliers of the same description as those seen in every ball-room, with the only difference that here the crystal prisms of the lustres are of the same material as the walls, the roof, the supporters of the gallery, and the gallery itself: namely, of salt. Our little party forms a dark, uncongenial speck in those lustrous surroundings. Involuntarily we look round for the fairy-party that lit these lights for the purpose of a dancing-night, and suppose that the light-footed company dispersed at our approach.

In very remote times this hall had witnessed many a brilliant festival, when human, not elfish element, was predominant; but for a century or two it has seldom, if ever, been used for its original purpose. To-day it is a show part of the mine and nothing more.

An empty ball-room "whose lights are fled, whose glory's dead," is of melancholy aspect, and we leave it without regret in order to descend another flight of steps and to enter the Kloski Room, the most beautiful of all; a gem, whose ornaments, cut into the solid salt-walls by the hand of real artists, are of superior conception and execution. We pass on over a wooden bridge; looking down from it right and left, we gaze into utter darkness; a fire-brand flung from the parapet of the bridge into the black gulf makes us realize the unsuspected depth of the precipice beneath our feet. Our way now leads us through another cave, to the fourth storey below.

Vast excavations, dimly lighted, lie before us; we have some difficulty in imagining that human hands have hewn out, bit by bit, this immense space. We step boldly forward in the twilight to explore this unknown region, but are soon arrested in our progress. We stand on the brink of a lake. This sheet of water, surrounded by salt rocks of fantastic shapes, is the largest of the sixteen lakes of this strange subterranean country. It is the reservoir in which all the waters of the mine mingle their floods. Rowing boats invite us to cross over to the other side. Almost involuntarily, as if drawn to it by magic, we step into one of them. Can any one of us at this moment fail to remember the mysterious River Styx and Charon the

old boatman? Ah, that some of us could sip but the tiniest drop of Lethe out of these greenish-grey salt-floods!

As we row forward the scene is suddenly illumined by a soft white light, streaming from the heights of some grand crystal rocks which throw their deep shadows on our course. The utter stillness is broken only by the plash of our oars, or a softly murmured word now and then. In front of us the shining crystal rocks narrow until there is merely a sort of porch left for us to pass through into another immense expanse of water. The tops of the two nearest rocks, forming this entrance, are united by an ornamental arch bearing in large transparent letters the miner's greeting: "Gluck auf," the "All hail!" of the German miners in any subterranean part of the world.

Our progress is a slow one, but as we have no hurricane to encounter on this still lake, we land safely at some convenient steps belonging to a parapet of salt, at the foot of a salt statue of the saint whose image Roman Catholics are so fond of placing at the water-side.

Thence we pass through the Steinhauser Chamber and some crystal-vaulted corridors, up a well staircase, and into the chapel of St. Anthony, the larger one of the two consecrated chapels of the mine, both of them being worked into the salt rock. The entrance arches, the walls and roofs, the columns, the altar, crucifix, candlesticks, and lamps; the pulpit, which is of excellent workmanship; the statues—all are of salt.

The salt in this place is not perfectly white, but of a greenish-grey hue, which, far from marring it, increases its beauty.

This chapel was hewn out of the living salt-rock about the year 1690, during the reign of the noble and gallant king Jan Sobieski.

The salt mine of Wieliczka holds its yearly festival on the third of July; on that day mass is read in this chapel. The ordinary services are held in the smaller and less ornamented chapel, also cut out of salt, as well as all its interior fittings. No miner would be missing from church on the third of July—they assemble in full number to attend at the service and glorify God with beautiful harmonious hymns, sung with sonorous voices, and with the utmost devotion. It is an imposing ceremony. Piety is a chief feature of the character of the Poles in general, and these quiet, sincere, simple-hearted mining-people of Wieliczka possess a great share of the national treasure.

On the afternoon of the third of July the mine is grandly illumined in all its different parts, and is visited by a great number of people; this offers the best opportunity for strangers to inspect the salt-city.

When we have visited the chief parts of the mine, we wish to see a little more of it—a little of what not everybody can see. Our request is granted, and we wander again upstairs and down, through shining, glittering, glistening, vaulted corridors; we pass under crystal arches, and over bridges where the dark salt river runs at our feet

with a dull sound ; we stop at a long vaulted cave roughly hewn out in the salt, without pretence to architectural beauty and brilliancy, and we find ourselves actually in the—stables. There are several establishments of the kind in the mine. More than a hundred horses are actively employed at the works, and seem to live comfortably and without any visible detriment to their health in these underground parts without seeing the open air and daylight for many years. All the caves we have seen are perfectly dry—else the objects, walls, &c., of salt would not have kept so well during long centuries. The prevailing temperature throughout all the mine is of an icy coldness.

Then we have a peep at the new excavations and the work going on there—for until now we have wandered through regions where the miner's hammer has not been heard for centuries.

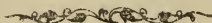
We see the process previously described, and then, in order to avoid going back all the way to the chief entrances, we are conveyed in the wake of some shining, white, brilliant salt-cubes to the upper world by the simple rope system. Our excursion is at an end.

The shepherd Wielicz, says the legend, discovered the salt-mine about the year 1250.

Passing in the course of centuries through many ownerships, it returned, after the treaty of peace at Paris, in 1814, into the undisputed possession of Austria. It is now thoroughly well managed and yields a sufficiently good income to the crown, besides providing a good number of officials with a comfortable living, and giving regular employment to the mining population of the town, without mentioning the many strangers who have found in Wieliczka a haven—not of rest, but what is much better here on earth—of honest work.

Several new mines, especially those at Strassfurth, in Germany, have endeavoured to compete with Wieliczka, but have not as yet been able to reach its standard. Wieliczka is still the greatest known salt-mine in the world, and by its ornamental antiquities the most curious and interesting.

MARIE ORM.



THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

AN AMERICAN STORY.

BY FRANCES E. WADLEIGH.

THE sun was low in the West and Judge Harnett felt the soothing influences of the balmy summer evening. He was at peace with himself and all the world, and listened dreamily to the childish chatter of his only daughter, who sat beside him on a rustic bench in the old-fashioned garden, whilst he contemplatively smoked his after-dinner cigar.

Suddenly there appeared before him an unwelcome and unexpected guest. One glance at her was enough to destroy all his previous luxurious ease of mind and body, without waiting for the menacing words which, without courteous preface, fell from her lips.

"Why do you persecute my race, Judge Harnett?"

"Begone, Nushbawun!" returned the Judge severely.

"I will not begone, Judge Harnett, until I have said my say."

"If you will not go of your own accord, I will have you driven off!" continued the Judge, a slight trace of amusement as well as anger in his tones.

"You cannot, and you dare not," answered the intruder, slowly and with determination, as she took a step or two nearer, and looked him squarely in the eyes.

The defiant speaker was an old, malicious-looking Indian named Nushbawun. She was the last of her tribe who remained in the neighbourhood of Milford. Indeed, there were not a hundred of her race to be found in the whole State of N——, and she herself was not even half civilized. She bore an uncanny reputation. Those who scorned to own themselves weak enough to believe in witchcraft or diabolism, said she was a thievish, hypocritical old squaw; others, less strong-minded, feared her, and tried to propitiate her: not that they really believed she was a witch, or had the "evil eye"—if their own statements might be trusted.

So what with her herb medicines for the sick, whether man or beast; her well-made baskets, her charms and philtres sold on the sly to credulous lovers, and her prophecies of future events for the believing or the frolicsome, old Nushbawun drove a thriving trade and was a power in and around Milford.

"I have a mission to you, Judge Harnett, from my people," continued she after a moment of defiant silence, "which you must hear. In Congress, eight days ago, you said ——"

"Why, Nushbawun, do you read the newspapers?" asked the Judge with a laugh.

"No. But your words were hardly cold upon your lips, before they reached me and others whom you slandered. Ah, you jeer at me; you say I am a humbug, a deceiver, but there are things beyond your ken; things——"

"Nushbawun," interrupted the Judge, "what is it you want? Tell me at once, or my servants shall turn you out."

"What do I want? Justice! Justice!" almost screamed the woman. "Justice for my race, for the owners of this land which you and your fathers wrested from us with lying promises!"

"I never stole your land. My ancestors bought this farm, and many an acre more, from your forefathers and paid them their price."

"Yes, *your* land was honestly gained. But it is you who have wronged us. You said—and your words were printed and scattered far and wide—that the Indian is a drunken, dirty, thievish, murderous, lying animal. Did you not say it?"

"Yes, or words to that effect. What of it?"

"To-morrow you return to Washington; when you get there you must unsay those words ——"

"I must!" interrupted the Judge in amused contempt.

"Yes, you must; I command it! I command you to deny your statement." And Nushbawun spoke authoritatively. One might have fancied her a dusky queen issuing powerful edicts.

"See here, Nushbawun; don't waste your breath; you know you can't impose upon me; I don't care two straws for your commands. Your familiar—black cat, or whatever you pretend it to be—informed you correctly as to my speech, and I repeat it now. What is more, I tell you to your face that you are one of the worst of the whole gang. Too lazy to work, you wring money, food and clothing from credulous fools by pretending to tell fortunes: to conjure evil spirits out of or into men and beasts. You are not murderous only because you live within reach of the law, which, unfortunately for us, your comrades in the far West do not."

"Then you refuse to do us justice?"

"I am one of the unsentimental few who do render you justice! Others, who know less about you, prate about the 'noble red man,' the 'ill-used owner of the soil.' I, if I could do as I would, would put an end to ninety-nine hundredths of you and wipe you off the face of the earth," answered the Judge, not angrily but firmly.

Now Nushbawun was not a picturesque squaw. Her long, unkempt black hair straggled from beneath a man's hat and fell in elf locks over an evil face. Her eyes were bleared, watery and wicked. Fumes of bad whiskey issued from her large lips and jagged, fang-like teeth; her fingers were long, claw-like and grimy; and her apparel was nondescript both as to colour and material.

As the Judge boldly declared his opinion of the red man she glared at him with venomous hatred in every feature. When he finished speak-

ing she drew herself up to her full height, and brandishing in the air an oddly-forked stick which was her constant companion, she cried :

"Who is murderous now? It is only because *you* live within reach of the law that our lives are safe. Judge Harnett, I have given you a chance to do us justice and you refuse with added insults. Now hear my words and heed them. This day ten years, the eve of the longest day in the year, the eve of the day that should see your daughter begin her twentieth year, you will recall this hour, this scene, and this curse that I now pronounce upon you ; you will think of Nushbawun and her wrongs, but all too late ; you will weep, your heart will be wrung—and there is the cause !"

And with the last words, she waved her crook over Minnie's head, and suddenly disappeared, while the Judge turned to put his arm around the pale, frightened child.

Poor little Minnie burst into tears, and no amount of logic, persuasion, or caresses from her father could convince her that she was not henceforth under a spell, or that Nushbawun's curse could fail to be accomplished.

Judge Harnett could not remain many hours with the child, as he was obliged to start for Washington the next day. He had come home in the very midst of an important and tempestuous Session of Congress to attend the wedding of his eldest son, and had to hasten back to his post of duty, where for six years he had been representative for his native county. He was a man of untiring industry and unquestioned honesty, and was deservedly popular in Milford. At the last election no one had come forward as opposition candidate, until, for very form's sake, one of his townsmen had consented to do so at the last moment. It would spoil all the fun and excitement of an election in the United States, if there were not at least two candidates for every office. The old woman's dire predictions had no effect upon the Judge's Indian policy. Never was there an Indian bill brought before the House of Representatives, that he did not raise his voice in protest against furnishing the aborigines with whiskey to inflame their evil passions, and arms and ammunition to cut off the flower of our youth.

But Mrs. Harnett viewed the matter in a different light. From that hour she looked upon Minnie as either to follow her dead sisters to an early grave, or to suffer some great trouble in atonement for her father's hard-heartedness.

As the years rolled on, and Minnie grew to be a tall, graceful girl whose beauty and sweet temper were universally acknowledged, the mysterious evil that awaited her caused her to be regarded with a special tenderness.

For Nushbawun's curse was widely known and generally believed in ; the more so because some of her subsequent prophecies were fulfilled with remarkable exactitude. In a fit of intoxication, Caleb

Dawson drove her from his kitchen one sleety night, and as she went away she warned him that liquor would bring him death within a twelvemonth; and it did so. Josiah Patterson refused to give her a turkey one thanksgiving-day, and she truly foretold the sudden flitting of his wealth. Mrs. Jamison was hysterically inconsolable the day her husband was buried; Nushbawun said that in six months she would wed again, and the widow's mother, scandalized, gave her a scolding. At this Nushbawun bade her set her house in order, for the wedding would surely take place, and would be so little to her liking that she would die by her own hand the day after. All of which actually happened. To be sure, Dr. Barton and Judge Harnett said that anyone could have predicted Dawson's death, that Patterson's poverty was a natural consequence of his extravagance, and that the Jamison prophecy caused its own fulfilment for the simple reason that the two women had not mental strength to resist a fancied fate. But what availed the opinion of two men, when the whole township was against them? Nushbawun had certainly predicted these things; they had certainly happened; therefore the squaw must be infallible, they argued.

When Minnie was about sixteen she was very ill with pneumonia; everyone then thought that death was Nushbawun's curse. But she recovered, and grew strong and beautiful. When two or three worthless lovers appeared the gossips sighed; but as they were refused, a miserable married life was evidently not it.

Philip Renwick, Dr. Barton's nephew, came to Milford to assist his uncle when Minnie was about eighteen, and as soon as the two young people met, their hearts went out towards one another. Impulsive, and sure that he had now loved for the first and only time, Philip declared his love within three months.

"Yes, Philip," answered Minnie after much sweet pleading from her lover, "I do love you, and for that reason I must say *no* to you."

Pressing her yielding form to his manly heart, he whispered:

"But you cannot mean both *yes* and *no*, my darling! You have owned that you love me: why may I not ask your father for you? He does not dislike me, I think."

"Oh no; he esteems you very highly. But you know my misfortune."

"Your misfortune?" echoed he, mystified.

"Yes; there is a dark fate in store for me, and I cannot let you link your life to mine, lest the curse fall on you too."

"Nonsense, Minnie. *You* don't really place any faith in that wretched old Indian's ravings, do you?" asked Philip with loving raillery.

"Hush, hush! Don't speak so of her."

"What harm can that old hag do to me—or to you either?" answered Philip, kissing again and again the sweet red lips which

trembled with fear for him, and the gentle eyes that moistened with tears on his account.

"Don't, Philip!" cried Minnie, as she tried, rather feebly, it must be confessed, to draw from his embrace. "It is of no use for you to love me; I shall not live to be twenty—or to marry."

"Yes you will, if the unremitting care of your attending physician can prolong your life," laughed he.

When Judge Harnett was appealed to by Philip, he readily gave his consent to the proposed marriage, but his wife was not so cordial. When alone with her husband she said:

"I do not see how you could have said *yes* to young Renwick without any proviso whatever. Just think how little we really know about him! Perhaps this curse is to come through him."

"O hang that curse! For a sensible woman, Minerva, you do harp most abominably on one string. I'm sick of it," said the Judge. But his tone was not as cross as his words.

"So am I; sick of hearing as well as of thinking of it. You are incredulous, I know, but at least you can go to his former home, and inquire all about Philip's past life."

As that was only common sense, curse or no curse, the Judge agreed to it, and his inquiries brought to light nothing unfavourable to his would-be son-in-law. So the engagement was a settled thing.

With his usual impetuosity, Philip began at once to talk of the wedding-day, but Minnie would not, for a long time, consent to even discuss the possibility of marriage.

"Can I never persuade you that you are morbid on this subject?" said he one day.

"No," replied Minnie, sadly; "and what is more, you cannot convince me that your incredulity is genuine."

"I think I can! You believe, don't you, that I am in a hurry to be married? that I'd go for ring and licence this very hour if you would permit me to?"

Minnie laughed as she replied demurely:

"I think you have hinted as much once or twice."

"I certainly shall be neither happy nor contented until you are my own dear wife, and so strong is my belief that that old Nushbawun is a humbug that I hereby solemnly appoint the twenty-first of June next, the day *after* the Awful Unknown is to take place (according to the squaw), as our wedding-day. Now do you believe that I really scorn the prediction?"

"Oh Philip! you did not see her and hear her as I did that day! Child as I was, she frightened me; her tones were awful; she cast fierce looks at me——"

"You have heard 'Il Trovatore,' have you not?"

Surprised at his apparently irrelevant question, Minnie responded in the affirmative.

"Then perhaps you remember the first scene, where Ferrando

sings"—and Philip, in a rich baritone voice, sang with mock tragic gestures :

"Abbietta Zingara, fosca vegliarda !
Cingevai simboli di maliarda ;
E sul fanciullo con vico arcigno,
L'occhio affiggea torvo, sanguino !"

"But Philip, that old witch did do mischief," exclaimed Minnie.

"To her own child, not to the Count's, you remember. Now, to remind you that even first-class, operatic, Spanish gipsies' curses are not infallible (and so, of course, an every-day, half-civilized American Indian's drunken ravings cannot be), every time I hear you allude to Nushbawun I shall sing 'Abbietta Zingara,' no matter where we are."

Philip kept his word, and Minnie so dreaded to hear Ferrando's song, knowing that it was intended as kindly mockery, that she rarely alluded to her own terrors. But Philip could not be always with her, nor could she readily overcome the fear of years. So as the dreaded day drew near, both Minnie and her mother became pale and sad.

The morning of the twentieth dawned clear, balmy and beautiful. Up to this date no shadow of evil had fallen upon Minnie. But then, argued the credulous, old Nushbawun had said that it was to be on, not before, the twentieth that Judge Harnett was to be punished through his child.

In accordance with the Judge's orders, all was ready for the morrow. Guests were bidden from far and near to witness the marriage in the morning, to join in the sumptuous wedding-breakfast at noon, and to while away the afternoon—evening too, if they chose—with music, dancing, and merriment. Every one who was invited had accepted with seeming alacrity ; *seeming*, for in their hearts most of them felt that it was all a mockery, a vain braving of fate.

The bridal dress and veil were marvels of fineness and beauty ; but Mrs. Harnett gave a tearful assent to Minnie's whispered request that she might be robed in them for her coffin.

The day—oh, how long it seemed !—crept slowly by. One relative after another arrived from distant towns, so that before sunset the house was full. By sunset, too, Minnie and her mother were so nervous with excitement and apprehension, that Dr. Barton drew Judge Harnett and Philip aside, and said :

"Those two are almost crazed ! We are the only ones who do not look and speak as if death were already in the house. My advice is to give each of them a soothing draught, a strong sedative, that will tide them safely over the rest of the day. If we don't do something poor Minnie will really go crazy ; her brain is half on fire now ; and so the old witch—or demon—will see her prophecy fulfil itself."

His listeners agreed with him, and he added :

"In the breast pocket of my linen driving-coat, Philip, you will find some powders that I brought over for this very purpose. Mix two of them in two tumblers half full of water, and administer them to Minnie and Mrs. Harnett."

Philip hastened to execute his uncle's command, and when he handed the glass to Minnie he said :

"Here, dear, drink this ; it will quiet your nerves ; you are worn out, and I don't want a ghostly bride to-morrow."

"To-morrow !" echoed Minnie sadly, drinking the opiate.

"Yes, to-morrow," repeated he firmly. "Now lie down on this sofa for a few moments, and you, Mrs. Harnett, settle yourself comfortably in this big arm-chair. Go to sleep, both of you, and when you wake up, you will be happier."

So, taking no notice of the clinging fondness with which Minnie returned his kisses, as if saying farewell, he darkened the windows, and left the room.

The evening passed, and midnight came, but the sleepers remained secluded.

"Twelve o'clock !" cried Philip as the last stroke died away from the clock on the mantelpiece. "Let's wake them, and have a laugh at their expense."

"No, no ! Let them sleep a little longer," answered the Doctor. "My dose was a strong one, and they may not waken for some time. Send the visitors to bed, and we will doze here in our chairs until morning."

So the three gentlemen sat by the open windows in the library, smoking, dozing and occasionally talking ; and watched the sweet June night, the shortest in the year, turn from semi-darkness to the glorious twilight of an early midsummer's day. At last the sun shot his beams athwart the sky, and then showed a broad, smiling face in the east.

"Sunrise !" cried Philip. "Now it is day, my wedding-day ! The twentieth is past and gone : let us rouse the sleepers."

And followed by Philip and his uncle, Judge Harnett led the way into the darkened room, threw open the shutters, and flooded the apartment with daylight.

Kneeling down by Minnie, Philip clasped her hands in his.

"Wake up, little wife !" he cried. "You have slept over the twentieth ; the sun of another day greets you !"

Minnie and Mrs. Harnett both started up quickly, crying in alarm :

"What has happened ? What is the matter ?"

"Matter ? Nothing, thank God !" replied the Judge.

Philip could not speak ; his lips were otherwise engaged ; but the Doctor, with tears in his eyes, growled :

"The matter is that Nushbawun is a humbug, and you have been two dear, deluded fools. The dreaded day is gone, and in just six hours there will be a wedding in this house."

There was no disputing facts ; it was indeed the twenty-first. And such a merry wedding as it was ! If Nushbawun had ever returned (but she was never again seen in that vicinity) she would have been town prophetess no longer. No one would have had faith in her after this egregious failure.

THE TWO PATHS.

EAGLE ! that o'er the sunbeam's track of light
 Flingest the shadow of thy stately wing,
 Hiest thou home from distant wandering
 Unto thine eyrie on the mountain height,
 Amid dark pine-groves, where lone waterfalls
 Each to another calls ?

No sound awakes the echoes, kingly bird !
 Save when mysterious tones and murmurs thrill
 The dim recesses of the caverned hill
 Through the still night,—or heavy leaves are stirred
 As sad winds wake the heart of solemn woods
 In rock-girt solitudes.

Bird of the shadowy plume and fearless gaze !
 Thou art an emblem of the gifted heart
 Called out and chosen for its nobler part,
 A lonely wrestler in life's thorny ways ;—
 And yet it is a glorious thing to claim
 Thy deathless crown, O fame !

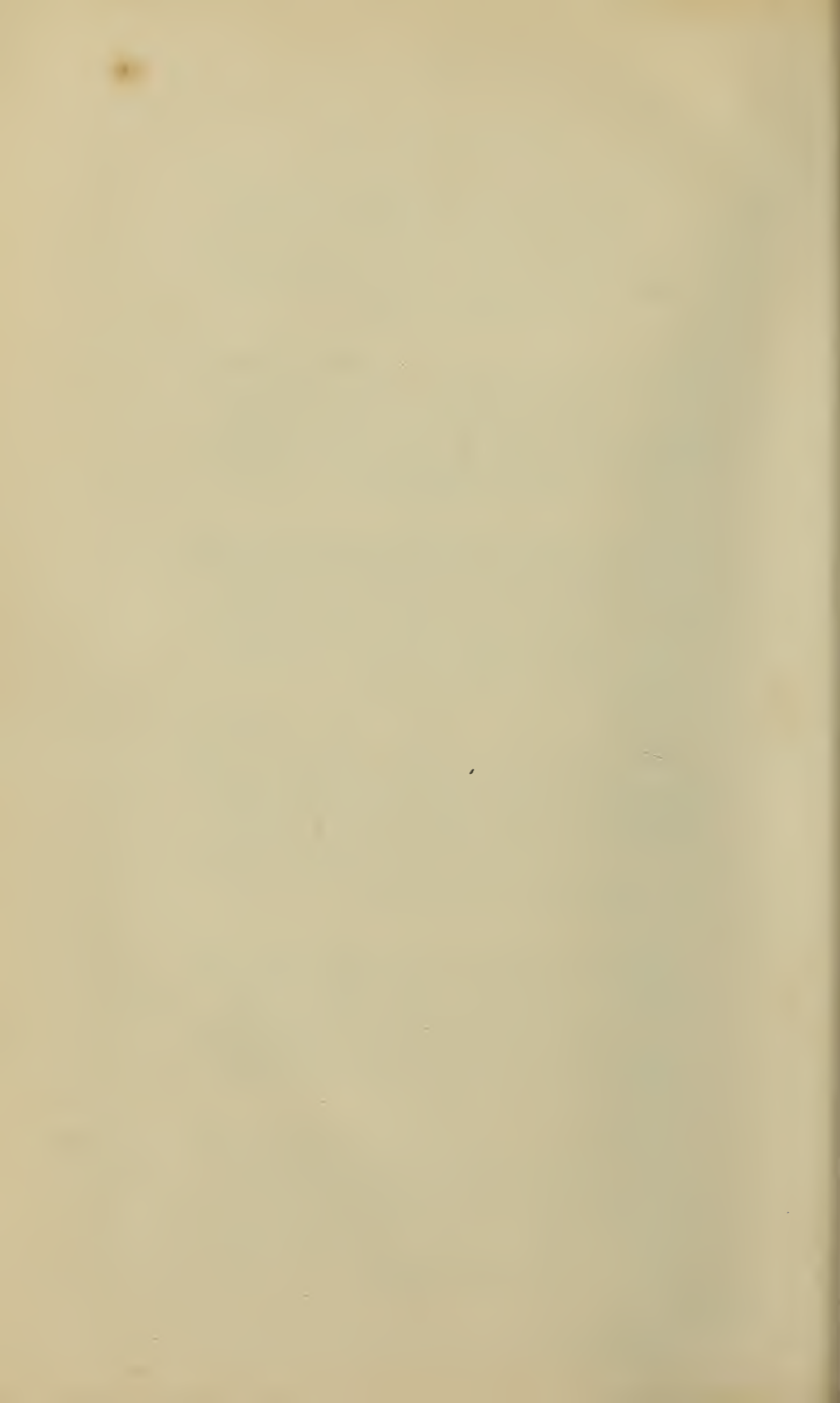
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Into the light thy trembling shadow floats,
 White dove ! returning through the evening skies,
 Flushed with the crimson sunset's burning dyes ;
 On the soft stillness thy caressing notes
 Fall as thy tired wing flutters to the rest
 Of thy low woodland nest.

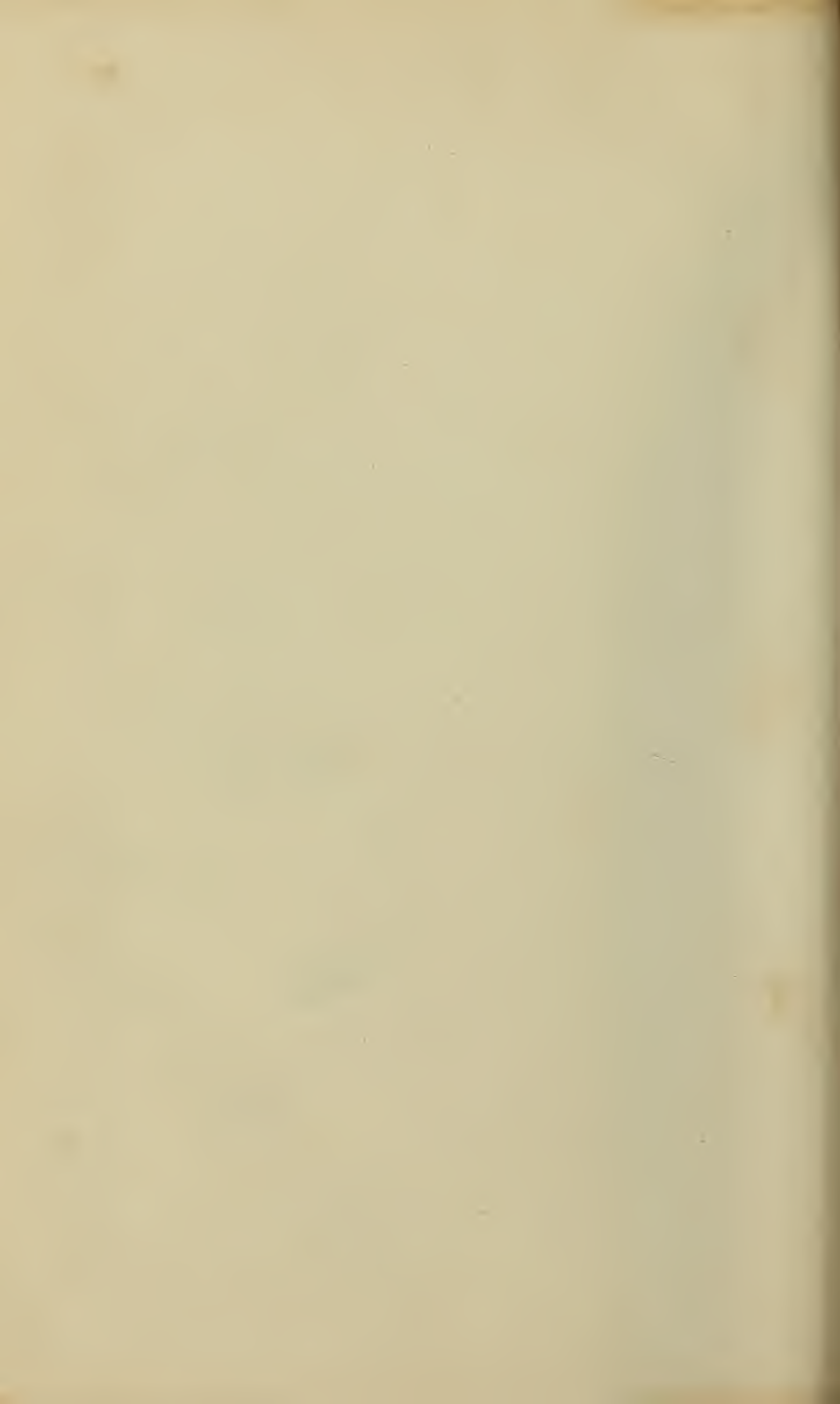
Thy home is where the greenwood shadows fall
 On fairy dingles bright with summer flowers,
 Where pleasant breezes fan the chestnut bowers,
 And the glad chimes of fountains musical,
 Amid the dancing leaves and blossoms, play
 All through the laughing day.

Like thee and thy bright life, oh, gentle dove !
 Is the glad spirit bound by holiest ties
 Of kindred hearts and loving sympathies
 To the warm shadow of home's sheltering love ;
 And ever in that sunny atmosphere,
 Abiding without fear.

J. I. L.







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The Argosy

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